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Collaborative Action Research and public services: insights into methods, findings and implications for public service reform

Richard Brunner, Hayley Bennett, Claire Bynner and James Henderson

Foreword by Oliver Escobar



What Works Scotland aims to improve the way local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service development and reform.

We are working with Community Planning Partnerships involved in the design and delivery of public services (Aberdeenshire, Fife, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire) to:

- learn what is and what isn't working in their local area
- encourage collaborative learning with a range of local authority, business, public sector and community partners
- better understand what effective policy interventions and effective services look like
- promote the use of evidence in planning and service delivery
- help organisations get the skills and knowledge they need to use and interpret evidence
- create case studies for wider sharing and sustainability

A further nine areas are working with us to enhance learning, comparison and sharing. We will also link with international partners to effectively compare how public services are delivered here in Scotland and elsewhere. During the programme, we will scale up and share more widely with all local authority areas across Scotland.

What Works Scotland brings together the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh, other academics across Scotland, with partners from a range of local authorities and:

- Glasgow Centre for Population Health
- Improvement Service
- Inspiring Scotland
- IRISS (Institution for Research and Innovation in Social Services)
- NHS Education for Scotland
- NHS Health Scotland
- NHS Health Improvement for Scotland
- Scottish Community Development Centre
- SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations)

This is one of a series of papers published by What Works Scotland to share evidence, learning and ideas about public service reform. This paper relates to the What Works Scotland collaborative action research workstream.

Drs Hayley Bennett and James Henderson are research associates based at the University of Edinburgh, and Drs Richard Brunner and Claire Bynner are research associates at the University of Glasgow.

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Foreword

I am delighted to welcome you warmly to this timely and insightful publication. The report will be of special interest to practitioners involved in public service reform and policy work, be it at national or local levels, as well as to researchers working at the frontiers of methodological innovation.

There are two features that make this a unique piece of work. Firstly, it reports key findings from one of the largest programmes of Collaborative Action Research (CAR) ever conducted in the field of public service reform. This is a significant contribution to the field of Critical Policy Studies, which is opening new ways of understanding and improving policy work on the ground. This field emerged to address the deficits of traditional policy analysis, too often removed from the everyday practices and agents that shape, reproduce or transform public governance. The authors manage to convey acutely the complex, fluid and challenging dynamics that unfold at the frontline of current efforts towards public service reform.

Secondly, the report offers an unusually transparent account of the methodological pains and gains of CAR. This isn't yet another publication where researchers distort into order the unavoidably messy endeavour of collaborative and applied inquiry. To the contrary, the authors take us into the backstage of a methodological approach that is characterised by an uneasy yet creative tension between principled values and pragmatic sensibilities.

Collaborative Action Research has immense transformative potential, but we are still learning about what it takes to make it work in the myriad contexts of contemporary governance. The account you are about to read is refreshingly detailed and candid, and offers invaluable learning for researchers who care about new forms of engaged scholarship that seek to make a difference.

The report rounds up key lessons from one of the most innovative strands of What Works Scotland. This has been co-led with remarkable skill and resilience by this group of researchers who have provided inspiration, challenge and insight of immeasurable benefit to everyone in the team and throughout the programme. Delving into this report will reward you with a better understanding of the pleasures and pressures of collaboration and research in the challenging context of current public service reform. And that better understanding is a key foundation to advance the social, methodological and democratic innovation needed to improve governance and policy outcomes. I hope you enjoy the reading!

Oliver Escobar

Co-director of What Works Scotland at The University of Edinburgh

Executive summary

Collaborative Action Research and public services: insights into methods, findings and implications for public service reform

This paper aims to share the findings from the What Works Scotland programme of Collaborative Action Research (CAR). CAR is a way of working that challenges traditional approaches to research and evidence. As a process of co-production, partnership and evidence-informed change, it exemplifies the transition to collaborative governance argued for by the Christie Commission (2011). The paper highlights the learning and insights that we have gained from applying CAR to multi-sector public service partnerships and, more generally, to processes of public service reform and collaborative governance in Scotland.

It is based on work facilitated by What Works Scotland researchers Hayley Bennett, Richard Brunner, Claire Bynner and James Henderson in four community planning partnerships and forms part of a wider programme of research by What Works Scotland.

What Works Scotland is a four-year (2014-2018) research collaboration between the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. The collaboration's research agenda is to improve how local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service reform (PSR). Four researchers, with support from the What Works Scotland directors and other members of the team, led the What Works Scotland Collaborative Action Research (CAR) programme.

Between 2015 and 2017, the researchers supported groups of public service practitioners as they undertook group inquiries in four community planning partnerships (CPPs): Aberdeenshire, Fife, Glasgow, and West Dunbartonshire. These sites illustrate spatial diversity across Scotland – urban, rural, remote and levels of inequality. The practitioners in each CAR group came from diverse organisations and professions, and had differing levels of knowledge, skills and responsibilities. They worked with the researcher to achieve an evidence-informed approach to PSR in one area of their work. Key elements in the developing CAR programme included a series of national learning events (retreats) for CPP practitioners and the researchers, and a peer support group for the researchers.

This was the first time that CAR has been attempted in complex public service partnerships. Therefore, this project was a trailblazer for methodological innovation and learning as well as providing insights into PSR in practice. For the researchers, CAR involved a challenging dual process of supporting the local practitioners in generating data; and, at the same time, collecting data for What Works Scotland's wider analysis of CAR and its potential value to PSR. This paper considers our key findings for others who are commissioning or conducting CAR in similar contexts and for policy-makers and practitioners more generally. It is structured into four sections:

- Section 1: CAR in community planning partnerships – drawing on theory, context, methods and experiences of actual practice
- Section 2: Three key elements of CAR: collaboration & participation; research & inquiry; and action & change
- Section 3: CAR, PSR and the wider context of collaborative governance and austerity
- Section 4: Conclusion.

Key learning and insights – CAR in community planning partnerships

- Collaborative Action Research is a flexible research methodology that integrates the three key elements of collaboration and participation, research and inquiry, action and change.
- Community planning is a relational process that provides an opportunity for participants to work together to operationalise policies. This process is inherently uncertain and interpretive. CAR can support the community planning process by uncovering the values and assumptions underpinning services; and by supporting participants to adapt creatively, reflect on and even at times subvert institutional norms.
- Changing CPP priorities, skills and experience, levels of commitment and changing roles of key staff mean that flexibility is needed to adapt to change. The What Works Scotland programme adapted to this variation by offering a diversity of CAR activities in response to local contexts and institutional needs.
- What Works Scotland researchers played multiple roles in building relationships across the CPP and with participants. This included:
 1. acting as researcher-facilitators including working with multiple stakeholders; networking; writing research guidance; facilitating groups; knowledge brokering; and coordinating collaborative writing
 2. nurturing vertical and horizontal relationships within groups and across CAR activities
 3. working within the timescales and autonomy that each CAR group and context offered.
- CAR requires a commitment from researchers to adapt to organisations, practitioners and needs, and to develop context-sensitive methodologies through on-going dialogue
- Undertaking CAR in the inherently dynamic policy and practice context of community planning is challenging. Rather than adopting a single model, researchers working in these contexts need to draw on different theories, methods and models.
- CAR is a shared perspective and approach that entails integrating the key elements of collaboration and participation, research and inquiry, and action and change.

Collaboration and participation – key areas of learning from across the case sites

- All CAR groups involved multiple members, each with varying degrees of involvement. Key to the success of CAR groups were core members, who committed to the process. Other participants were also essential to deepening analysis and disseminating the learning.
- CAR activities brought together members from across public service organisations, cultures and structures. The emphasis on collaboration within the CAR group mirrored the collaborative aspirations of PSR in Scotland.
- CAR can create a space for innovation and collaboration across practitioners of varying seniority, experiences and knowledge.
- All CAR groups included members with diverse prior involvement (or none) in undertaking research. Facilitation of groups was essential to sustaining inclusion.
- Each What Works Scotland researcher played a range of key roles in each inquiry group including as facilitators, researchers and advocates. Researcher facilitation poses a key challenge as to whether CAR in CPPs has the potential to be sustained independently of external input.
- Cross CAR group exchange and learning was integral to the What Works Scotland CAR approach. The programme demonstrates the potential for wider collaboration, although this requires future facilitation and resourcing. Examples from the What Works Scotland programme include:
- Communities of Practice: building topic focussed communities of practice across practitioners in Scotland;
- Facilitative Leadership Training: building a wider network of practitioners skilled in facilitation and collaboration and the principles of dialogue and deliberation.

Research and inquiry – key areas of learning from across the case sites

- The evidence used in CAR inquiries was mainly experiential and local knowledge. Other types of evidence included statistical and desk-based sources; and evidence reviews. The use of evidence reviews proved valuable in framing events, discussions, analysis and report writing. A key role for the researchers was in both brokering access to knowledge resources and supporting analysis of data.
- A CAR approach can help to maintain a balance between instrumental (applied) knowledge and conceptual (theoretical) knowledge. This is supported by the role of an external researcher-facilitator by creating safe spaces for more critical framing of discussions and offering specialist skills and knowledge to support CAR groups.
- The ideal of CAR seeks to blur the boundaries between the roles of the researcher and the participants. The CAR approach was both participatory (participants conduct and lead on their own research) and researcher-led (driven by the researcher-

facilitator). In some cases, the researcher and participants adopted a shared approach to the tasks in the research process.

- With some CAR groups, we used evaluation tools (e.g. contribution analysis or theories of change) to support participants in considering how they might evaluate an initiative. Here, CAR proved valuable not as an approach to evaluation in itself, but as a process that helped to frame the criteria for evaluation in more critical, reflective ways.

Action and change – key areas of learning from across the case sites

The CAR groups generated diverse outputs including formal research reports and more creative outputs (such as short films and infographics) and three different types of change-making/ influencing strategies: **Systems-change** – culture change across one or more partnership structure or system; **Research skills** – the development of research skills that support longer-term change; **Christie-focussed learning** – working in relation to the Christie policy agenda.

- Arguably, the impact of CAR on influencing change in public services tends to be smaller, longer-term and in ways that are unanticipated rather than leading to ‘grand plans’.
- Given the complexities of collaborative working, it is difficult to attribute longer-term impacts on service performance and wider social and economic outcomes to CAR. However, what emerges is the evolving, adaptive nature of the CAR process and the potential for CPP partners to learn from early experiences to explore opportunities and further projects. CAR builds local capacity to work with current challenges and future aspirations for collaborative governance.

Insights from CAR for Public Service Reform and the four pillars of ‘Christie’

CAR supports partnership working by:

- offering spaces for the practical development of a shared collaborative ethos
- engaging with senior management to build and sustain support for collaborative working
- providing a range of learning opportunities for building local collaborative capacity.

CAR supports people (and participation) through:

- building a shared ethos of collaborative and participative working
- highlighting the value of facilitation skills to support collaborative working and improve the quality of dialogue and deliberation in partnership work

- using local staff knowledge, diverse sources of evidence, pooling resources and budgets.

CAR supports performance by:

- engaging public service staff in working with diverse sources of evidence towards longer-term outcomes
- supporting local staff in developing a more informed and critical reflective practice
- facilitating context-relevant approaches
- developing Communities of Practice across CPPs in Scotland
- learning from what doesn't initially 'work' to find ways creative ways forward
- brokering knowledge and evidence resources from local, regional and national agencies.

CAR supports prevention. In most of our case sites, prevention did not emerge as a topic for a group inquiry. Nevertheless, CAR offers emerging insights into this highly demanding area of local policy and practice by:

- highlighting the complexity of what is needed e.g. upstream-focus, evidence use, pooling budgets and realistic strategies
- providing long-term spaces for incremental working across CPPs and other partnerships to engage on prevention and early intervention.

Maximising impact in the context of austerity

CAR can contribute valuably to evidence-informed implementation of the Christie Commission agenda. However, CAR also supports a deeper, more critical understanding of the wider context and implications of PSR for collaborative governance. Using CAR in practice has highlighted the importance of the following conditions that enable PSR:

- significant commitment and support across partnerships from senior management
- staff teams and inquiry teams with reasonable job stability that supports ongoing dialogue
- further openness to critical, reflective thinking that informs dialogue on policy barriers
- a move away from linear models of evidence-based policy to context-relevant evidence use
- a willingness to share learning – both 'success' and 'failure' – more widely across Scotland.

In conclusion

In this highly uncertain policy and public spending context, our findings demonstrate that CAR has the potential to contribute to developing the practices of collaborative governance – partnership, participation, performance and prevention – by constructively and critically engaging with current policy and practice expectations. In doing so, CAR can provide useful insights into the context and current challenges of PSR.

In providing this material from the What Works Scotland programme, we aim to support the ongoing dialogue on the development of collaborative governance in Scotland. We do not seek to present CAR as the ‘solution’ to developing collaborative governance, or for that matter, as a way of coping with the impacts of ‘austerity’. We argue that in this hugely uncertain, demanding policy context, CAR offers a shared perspective and flexible approach to address the complex and inter-related, challenges of public service change (PSR) and social change.

Glossary

Key terms used in this report:

Collaborative action research or ‘CAR’: a process that involve elements of (1) collaboration and participation; (2) research and inquiry; and (3) action and change. These can be integrated in varied forms but the process will be underpinned by democratic and dialogical practice.

Community planning partnerships (CPPs): statutory public service governance bodies in Scotland in 32 local authority areas that bring together a range of public service partners including the local authority, NHS Board, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, and third sector bodies.

Inquiry group: a team of co-researchers with different professional identities, knowledges and backgrounds exploring a co-produced common topic. This group-based inquiry process involves intensive work over a period of time using participatory approaches and aspires to *both* achieve pragmatic change *and* support reflexivity and critical thinking.

Introduction

Collaborative action research (CAR) is a way of working that challenges traditional approaches to research and evidence. As a process of co-production, partnership and evidence-informed change, it exemplifies the transition to collaborative governance argued for by the Christie Commission (2011).

This paper aims to share the findings from the What Works Scotland programme of CAR. It highlights the learning and insights that we have gained from applying CAR to multi-sector public service partnerships and, more generally, on processes of public service reform and collaborative governance in Scotland. It is based on work facilitated by What Works Scotland researchers in four community planning partnerships and forms part of a wider programme of research by What Works Scotland.

What Works Scotland is a four-year (2014-2018) research collaboration between the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow. The research agenda is to improve how local areas in Scotland use evidence to make decisions about public service reform (PSR). One of the overarching aims of What Works Scotland was to ***“embed a unique and innovative collaborative action-orientated approach to policy making and delivery”*** (What Works Scotland programme plan 2016: 5). This was to be done to support understandings of systems change and tackle the question ‘*what does and doesn’t work – and why*’ within PSR, as well as supporting and informing better evidence-use, collaborative governance and community empowerment. The resulting What Works Scotland Collaborative Action Research (CAR) programme was led by four researchers from the team, with support from What Works Scotland’s directors and other team members.

Between 2015 and 2017, the researchers worked with groups of public service practitioners to undertake group inquiries in four community planning partnerships (CPPs): Aberdeenshire, Fife, Glasgow, and West Dunbartonshire. These sites illustrate spatial diversity across Scotland – urban, rural, remote and levels of inequality. The practitioners in each CAR group came from diverse organisations and professions, and had differing levels of knowledge, skills and responsibilities. They worked with the researcher to achieve an evidence-informed approach to PSR in one area of their work. Key elements in developing the CAR programme included a series of national learning events (retreats) for CPP practitioners and the researchers, and a peer support group for the researchers.

This was the first time that CAR has been attempted in complex public service partnerships and so this project was a trailblazer for methodological innovation and learning, as well as providing insights into PSR in practice. For the researchers, CAR involved a challenging dual process of supporting the local practitioners in generating data, and, at the same time, collecting data for What Works Scotland’s wider analysis of CAR and its potential value to PSR.

This report is aimed at the following audiences:

- researchers and commissioners – the methodology should interest those commissioning research around PSR and those seeking to undertake research with public services, such as academics and other researchers
- policy-makers and practitioners – the wider learning and findings should interest those seeking to develop public service partnerships and co-production, including practitioners, policy-makers, and government.

We would expect it to have value to the other What Works centres across the UK, the Economic and Social Research Council, and other research funding bodies who have interest in alternatives to the current evidence-based policy-making paradigm.

Layout: this paper is structured into four sections:

- **Section 1:** Conducting CAR in community planning partnerships – drawing on theory, context, methods and practice experiences
- **Section 2:** Three key elements of CAR: collaboration & participation; research & inquiry; and, action & change
- **Section 3:** CAR, PSR and the wider context of collaborative governance and austerity.
- **Section 4:** Conclusion.

See [Glossary](#) (page 7) for key terms

1. Section 1: CAR in community planning partnerships – approach and findings

This section describes how we adopted and adapted CAR within the four case sites. We present this as five initial discussions:

- What is collaborative action research?
- Understanding the context – community planning partnerships and community planning
- Methodological development
- Understanding CAR in practice.

What is collaborative action research?

Collaborative action research (CAR) is an approach that aims to bring together researchers and practitioners (of any type) and create shared understandings and actions. CAR is inherently a process of collaboration and constant change, continuous reworking and responding to context. There is no single definition or model of collaborative action research, and it is also variously known as “collaborative learning process” (Boezman et al., 2014, p.411) and “collaborative research” (Westling et al., 2014, p.428). The process incorporates two elements: collaboration in a group and action research.

CAR offers a framework that can draw on a range of research methods. The underpinning CAR rationale is that practitioners have ownership of the research process. They conduct the study through a facilitated process, drawing on a range of evidence types and research methods and reporting their findings. In its most common form, a researcher works closely with the group acting as a facilitator. This is the approach we largely adopted in the What Works Scotland [CAR Programme](#).

CAR has a long tradition in some policy, practice and/or research areas, particularly education, health care and organisational development (see for instance, Dickens & Watkins, 1999; Reason & Bradbury, 2006). In particular, there has been an emphasis on seeking to improve professional working practices through developing relationships between researchers and practitioners, and in so doing an expectation that:

1. researchers can support practitioners to understand and use evidence to inform policy and practice; and
2. practitioners can support researchers to experience and recognise the complexities of implementing policy and practice.

When developing new policies and/or designing new initiatives there is a tendency to prioritise certain types and sources of evidence (Durose et al 2017). To policymakers,

statistical data can appear as more robust or authoritative than qualitative data, but this can reduce complex social problems to something that appears simple to fix (Sullivan 2011; HM Government 2013). Qualitative data on the other hand can provide powerful narratives but these can sometimes be misleading. CAR can help to work through the limitations and advantages of different types of evidence by placing the currently available evidence in context, so that more open, critical and shared discussions can emerge.

In the process of conducting this work, we have developed a working definition of CAR:

“Our collaborative action research (CAR) is eclectic, aspirational and adaptive, drawing from various methods, and open to multiple perspectives. We understand CAR to involve elements of (1) collaboration and participation; (2) research and inquiry; and (3) action and change. These can be integrated in varied forms but will be underpinned by participatory practices that seek to achieve deeper understanding of the issues at hand.”
(adapted from Henderson & Bynner, 2018)

This definition anticipates that the collaborative ethos and processes underpinning CAR will support participants to recognise and value their starting point, whilst also providing a safe space to reconsider their assumptions regarding evidence and-relationship-informed change.

Background – the Christie Commission and community planning

In 2010, Dr Campbell Christie led a commission to identify the best ways to address the challenges of delivering public services in the context of reduced public funding, increasing demand, ‘wicked’ and seemingly intractable social problems, and rising inequalities. The Christie Commission (2011) concluded that public, third sector and private organisations had to work more effectively in partnership together and with communities to design and deliver public services to meet the needs of local people. The Christie Report highlighted the importance and urgent need to develop a sustained and coherent programme of public service reform.

The recommendations of the Christie Commission (2011) are often summarised and articulated as the four key pillars of reform. The Scottish Government framed the four pillars as people, partnership, performance and prevention in a formal response. The Scottish Government's approach to public service delivery and reform also focuses on the importance of ‘place’ (locality) as providing a *“magnet for partnership and the basis for stronger community participation in the design and delivery of local services”* (Scottish Government, 2011:10).

Importantly, community planning partnerships (CPPs) were named as the key delivery vehicles for this agenda of reform (Scottish Government, 2011; see also Bynner, 2017).

In this paper, instead of thinking about Community Planning as a relatively fixed and ordered institutional arrangement, we understand community planning as a complex relational process. In this (lower-case) format, community planning is an activity in which participants work together to creatively interpret, adapt, reflect on and occasionally subvert institutional rules and norms. CPPs are the organisations and institutions that define and set up these rules. The individual practitioners who work within them, those that Lipsky (2010) terms ‘street level bureaucrats’, construct and reconstruct what is known as ‘Community Planning’ and turn it into community planning as a process. This allows us to shift the focus of research away from the formal mechanisms of Community Planning to the actions of individuals and the meanings they attach to public service reform. Recognising the inherent uncertainty and interpretive flexibility in how policies are operationalised in practice and the significant role played by local agents in this, opens up the opportunity for CAR to uncover the values and assumptions underpinning service delivery – and then to consider alternatives.

Given the complexities and uncertainties in public service delivery and the demands this placed on their working practice, CAR offered particular advantages as a research approach. It provided:

- a flexible, embedded co-productive research approach that could be adapted to the local context
- an approach to research and practice in the field of local governance that could look beyond ‘what works’ to how reforms work, and why.

Methodological development

At the outset, What Works Scotland aimed to work with CPPs from across a range of different settings to provide diversity terms of populations, context and geography. In initially setting up the wider What Works Scotland programme in 2014, the team’s directors explored the potential of the CAR workstream. CPPs from across Scotland were invited to submit ‘expressions of interest’ to take part in the research programme and to identify up to four projects on which they proposed to work with us.

What Works Scotland selected Aberdeenshire, Fife, Glasgow, and West Dunbartonshire CPPs, in part based on their proposed projects and related commitment (see Table B below) and in part, on the diversity offered across the four case sites (full detail in [Appendix A](#)). Four researchers based at the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow led the CAR activities from 2015.

It is important to recognise that the CAR activities were with small groups of public services workers on particular thematic projects, rather than the 'whole' CPP. This would be too large an endeavour given the exploratory and intensive nature of the CAR process. Therefore, the CAR work conducted in each was not intended to be representative of the particular CPP, nor were the four CPPs representative of CPPs across Scotland as a whole.

As part of the CAR initiative, What Works Scotland also held three workshops (national retreats) bringing CAR group members and senior officers from each of the four CPPs together. The aim was to seek to cultivate CAR-related learning across the four case sites, including for CPP strategic leaders.

i. Conceptualising CAR

In the early stages of the programme, the researchers used a CAR diagram (Fig. 1) as a heuristic to begin early conversations and to conceptualise the potential arc of CAR (Bennett et al. 2015; Chapman & Hadfield, 2016).

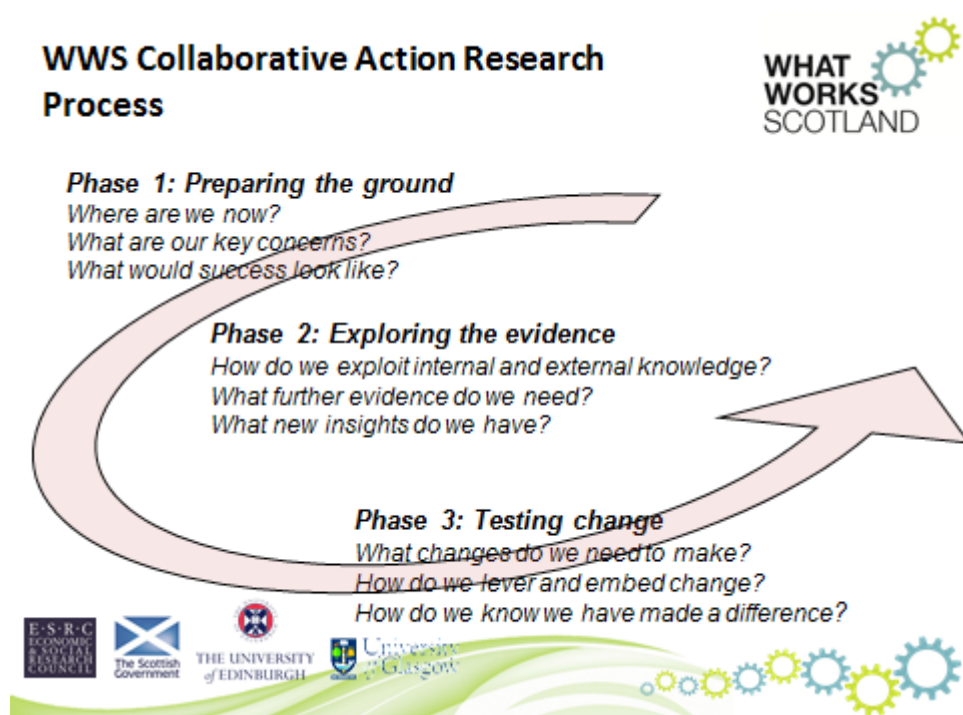


Figure 1 – initial heuristic diagram for the What Works Scotland CAR cycle (Chapman & Hadfield, 2016)

Whilst process models such as this provide structure and a visual tool for action research activities, in practice, CAR was a rich and complex process involving flexible, adaptive and context-specific activities. The What Works Scotland researchers departed from this heuristic to facilitate a co-creative process that sought to integrate core elements of

collaboration and participation; research and inquiry; and, action and change; in various ways across the four case sites. Although there was no singular model of CAR, in this paper we outline the range of shared characteristics of our work in the CPP settings, including context-specific considerations.

ii. Researcher peer support – the Professional Learning Community

There is considerable complexity in seeking to conduct CAR concurrently in different geographical sites and across service areas. At the beginning, the What Works Scotland directors worked with the researchers (and brought in Professor Mark Hadfield of the University of Cardiff) to deepen understanding of CAR conducted in other contexts. Each case site had a researcher to lead the CAR research-facilitation, with a director from the team also attached to each site. In order to co-ordinate, shape and develop the CAR programme, from mid-2015 the researchers initiated a professional learning community (PLC). The PLC's work was to address the inherent and recurrent complexity challenges as the CAR transformed over time, and to draw on CAR-related academic literature.

The PLC drew on others' expertise and input from a CAR researcher from an educational research background (Kevin Lowden, University of Glasgow). We held more than 60 PLC sessions – of various types – over three years to:

- advance the theory and methodology of the CAR programme
- provide peer support
- collate and critique CAR research literature
- advise each other on CAR-related tools
- link the CAR work to the wider What Works Scotland programme.

As the CAR evolved, the researchers produced [a range of CAR papers and blogs](#), gave presentations at academic conferences and policy events, and co-produced outputs to share learning and methodological innovation. The PLC allowed the space for shared analysis and reflection. This was persistently challenging due to the exploratory nature of CAR within these complex partnerships.

iii. Data generation

Most of the researchers adopted a dual approach to data collection; sometimes referred to as 'first order' and 'second order'¹. This dual approach recognises two distinctive levels of data generation and analysis. 'First order' data was the research conducted by the CAR

¹ The researcher in Aberdeenshire sought to use an alternative approach of concerned for multiple perspectives and fluidity of role (Kindon, Pain & Kesby, 2007) and aspired to engage across researchers, co-researchers and other participants in relation to data generation, interpretation and analysis and in respect of learning relevant to: (i) the initial problem under investigation; (ii) exploring the wider policy and practice context; and, (iii) considering the value of CAR to the current approach to public service reform.

groups of public service practitioners in the four sites. This data included case studies, interviews, surveys, statistical analysis and other forms of data collection that the participants undertook themselves. The 'second order' data was captured by the researchers based on their observations and recordings. This second order enabled the researchers to learn about the collaborative approach in varied contexts, and to consider the implications of the CAR work for public service reform.

One of the challenges of this was the capacity researchers to capture 'second order' learning about CAR and public service reform within the CAR group activities whilst playing a simultaneous facilitation role. Data collection also varied in each site depending on local CAR practices, relationships, ethical agreements and the context and timescales. Ethical approval for data collection in each site was gained from the Universities of Glasgow and Edinburgh respectively, and consent was gained from participants for the data to be used at these two levels.

Table A lists the first and second order data sources used to develop the findings in this paper.

Data	Source/ Authors
Context reports - background data and descriptions of the public service reform challenges and knowledge gaps in each CPP area	Practitioner only
Reflective accounts from CAR groups – recordings of group discussions, contemporaneous notes and observations, reflective fieldwork notes	Researcher only
Formal materials produced in CAR meetings, discussions and events – flipcharts, photographs, learning materials, minutes	Practitioner and researcher collaboration
Communications with CAR group members between sessions (emails, telephone calls)	Practitioner and researcher collaboration
Formal outputs from the CAR groups (published reports, blogs)	Practitioner and researcher collaboration
Formal second order data collection – surveys reflective templates, interviews, consultations	Researcher only
Reflective discussions at the PLC and associated reading group	Researcher only
Desk research	Researcher only
Two of the What Works Scotland national events for CAR group members – including event reports and reflective notes	Researcher only
Other events in each case site (e.g. learning days) – including event reports and reflective notes	Researcher only
Data collected to answer inquiry group research questions (e.g. interviews, focus groups, statistical analysis)	Practitioner and researcher collaboration

Table A – data sources

Participants in the CAR groups and other members of the What Works Scotland team contributed to the many outputs emerging from the CAR processes cited in this paper. However, the analysis and interpretation of findings in this paper remains the responsibility of the authors.

The What Works Scotland CAR activities

The CAR programme involved work within each of the four CPPs and collaborative work across the four CPPs.

CAR within the four CPPs

Table B provides an overview of where the CAR groups started, and where they ended. As the projects developed, it became clear that we could not adopt a single model approach to CAR. We had to be flexible in the way we worked to take account of different cultures, skills and experiences, relationships and priorities within each CPP and the different contexts in which we were working.

Each of the CPPs' proposed projects suggested exploring different policy areas of relevance to their contexts and priorities (Table B, column 2). These changed over time, resulting in delivery of the CAR projects described in Table B, column 3. Each researcher also conducted a range of complementary activities in each site such as workshops, training sessions, bespoke research projects, evaluation support and field trips, in order to strengthen the relationship between What Works Scotland and the case sites, and to underpin the CAR work. [Appendix B](#) describes the full range of activities pursued by the researchers in each case site.

One of our aims at the start of What Works Scotland was to put the recommendations from the Christie Commission into practice by adopting a flexible, co-productive methodology. The types of research conducted by CAR groups, and complementary activities initiated by the researchers diverged across the four sites and within each site to take account of the contexts of the public service practitioners. For example, each group we worked with had a unique configuration of levels of management and front-line staff, and variations in previous experience of research. CAR groups had different levels of capacity in terms of time and managerial support. Most importantly, each CAR group was pursuing a discrete PSR topic, each of which held its own requirements, timescales, and evidence base.

Case site CPP (What Works Scotland researcher and director linked to the site)	CAR projects proposed initially by CPPs (2014-15)	Focus of the CAR projects actually delivered (2015-17)
Aberdeenshire Researcher: Dr James Henderson Director: Nick Bland	a. health and social care; b. local and central community planning; c. road safety	a. Developing a strategic approach to capacity-building for health and well-being b. Multi-layered preventative partnership-working
Fife Researcher: Dr Hayley Bennett Director: Chris Chapman	a. a welfare hub service; b. a new family hub in a deprived locality; c. a schools intervention programme.	a. Exploring provisions for families in specific neighbourhoods b. Understanding welfare reforms and service needs c. Developing improved relationships and projects with schools to support students
Glasgow Researcher: Dr Richard Brunner Director: Nick Watson	a. evaluation of an area-based initiative ('Thriving Places') b. using evidence to tackle in-work poverty c. implementing and evaluating Participatory Budgeting (PB)	a. Evaluation of Participatory Budgeting b. Case study development in Thriving Places

West Dunbartonshire Researcher: Dr Claire Bynner Director: Ken Gibb)	a. Community-led action planning b. Community profiling c. Neighbourhood joint working	a. Evaluation of a community-led approach to service planning at a neighbourhood level
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Table B – summary of proposed and delivered CAR projects

Collaboration across the four CPPs

As well as the CAR inquiries and the complementary activities organised by the researchers, the What Works Scotland CAR programme included activities to support collaboration across the four sites. These sought to provide an opportunity for reflective learning and to develop a CAR Community of Practice across participants. Key cross-site events were as follows:

Collaborative action research timeline of joint activities

2014 - December



National event 1
Edinburgh

Presentations by CPP leads
on CPP contexts and
potential CAR projects.



2015 - June



National event 2
Edinburgh

CAR-focused contextual reports
produced by a sample of inquiry
group members; learning about
CAR; deliberating inquiry topics.



2016 - February



National event 3
Perth

Sample of CAR group members
presented on inquiry topics;
learning about CAR in practice;
developing a cross-site
Community of Practice; emergent
themes on public service reform.



2017 - April

Facilitation
training

Four public service workers from
each site, responding to a common
need identified through the CAR
work (participants were not all in
inquiry groups).

Note: the wide-range of [WWS Scotland-wide events on PSR-related topics](#) (2015-2018) also provided opportunities for those working in the case sites the chance to engage in wider dialogue.²

2. Although note that participants from more remote areas such as Aberdeenshire and West Dunbartonshire were more limited in their ability to attend some of the national WWS events held in Glasgow and Edinburgh

Conducting CAR in community planning partnerships – initial learning points

Here, we describe learning from our experiences in implementing this approach across the four case sites. We focus on resource diversities, the need to depart from a single CAR model, and on the necessarily active role of the researcher within the CAR groups.

i. CPP resources for CAR within each case site were variable

The CPPs were selected for their diverse geographies, social and economic histories and challenges. It is therefore unsurprising that the CPPs also varied in the level of staff time and resources they were able to commit to the CAR process. This led to diverse approaches across and within the four sites (see [Appendix B](#)). Some CAR group inquiries focussed on local place-based working and involved working with staff at a more operational level. Others were broader in their research focus, impacting across the whole area of the CPP, and involved staff in central CPP policy and planning teams.

There were divergences in terms of numbers of practitioners who were able to sustain engagement in the more open-ended and intensive work of the CAR groups. As a maximum, the Fife CAR programme approach engaged 48 core members in CAR groups, along with 14 core strategy group members, although these numbers include new staff who joined when others left, and not all attended groups regularly. Initiating and maintaining engagement required active work by the researchers and some of the leading practitioners.

A common feature across the case sites was the high level of staff turnover and change, as a result of the restructuring of services, limitations of practitioner time, and demands from competing priorities. However, for time-limited activities, such as learning days and development days CPPs were able to commit larger numbers of practitioners (see [Appendix B](#)).

This suggests that when setting up CAR processes, it is important to establish shared expectations of the active work required to animate and sustain CAR, the levels of commitment and resource required, and timescales for CAR inquiries. Setting clear expectations will maximise the potential for sustained involvement in and impact from the CAR activities that develop.

ii. What Works Scotland resources for CAR varied within each case site

Our own resources and their availability also shaped the activities in each of the sites. In some of the sites we were able to broker additional support or expertise (depending on the topic under investigation) to directly feed into the inquiries, demonstrating the ways in which universities can be useful partners in local reforms and efforts to use evidence. For example, In Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire, the researchers accessed expertise from the pool of What Works Scotland internal experts and academic partners to accelerate CAR-

related activities, such as: Evaluability Assessment (Dr Peter Craig, What Works Scotland director); developing community profiles (Bruce Whyte, Glasgow Centre for Population Health); and facilitating Contribution Analysis (Dr Christina McMellon, University of Edinburgh).

What Works Scotland funded the Paris Participatory Budgeting (PB) CAR international learning visit for Glasgow and Fife (accompanied by Professor Nick Watson) and a national event was organised in Aberdeen with Aberdeenshire CPP as part of the series on preventative approaches. With Aberdeenshire CPP, the What Works Scotland co-director allocated to support the work in the site (Dr Nick Bland) contributed as joint lead researcher across many of the case site activities during 2015 and 2016. In Glasgow, Professor Nick Watson supported the CAR work at a strategic level. In Fife, the researcher was able to draw on support from Kevin Lowden (University of Glasgow) to support the school and family inquiry groups during busy periods.

These examples indicate that when preparing to undertake CAR within CPP settings, bodies proposing to facilitate CAR and those potentially participating in CAR should consider, as far as possible, the potential resources that are available through the facilitating body to support CAR. Whilst one of the foundations of CAR is that it is responsive to emerging evidence and contexts, making linear planning an impossibility, incorporating co-planning of prospective resources more strongly at the outset will support the potential for CAR to leverage more powerful change processes.

iii. A flexible and pragmatic approach to underpin CAR

To establish trust, develop relationships and keep the CAR projects moving forward, each researcher had to adopt a flexible and pragmatic approach. This included offering other forms of research support and resource in addition to CAR. Some researchers presented their specialist areas of research to their CPP. Others provided significant complementary research support to the CPP such as producing [community profiles in West Dunbartonshire](#), and [researching good practice in co-production in Glasgow](#). Complementary work also included organising seminars and brokering external speakers to cover topics such as distributed leadership, prevention, and community-led approaches to reducing poverty (full detail in [Appendix B](#)).

Second, for almost all the practitioners we worked with, the concept of collaborative action research was new. To address this, the researchers provided examples of action research in similar contexts to help build the understanding. They also designed research training sessions and bespoke tools for CAR. In Fife, the researcher produced customised support materials including a nine-step guide to help practitioners conceptualise the research process, introductory social research training (in cooperation with a Fife council research officer), and brokered presentations from academic researchers on action research approaches. Over time, the Fife practitioner teams and researcher adapted and co-designed

their work to produce a more context-suited CAR programme (see Bennett, 2017: [What Works Scotland Fife CAR Overview document](#)).

iv. The active role of the CAR researcher-facilitator

In each case site, we had to undertake complex relational work across different layers within organisations and services involved in community planning. This process was fundamental to successfully pursuing CAR in each of the four case sites, and required the researchers to adopt dual researcher-facilitator roles. The key features and concerns of this approach are described below in more detail.

Multi-tasking as researcher-facilitators

In all sites, the researchers undertook multiple roles:

- Stakeholder management
- Research skills training and guidance
- Collegial support and reassurance
- Event organising
- Meeting facilitation
- Managing group dynamics
- Networking and trust building activities
- Knowledge brokerage
- Report writing and editing
- Supporting co-production of 'first order' research
- Conducting 'second order' research.

Establishing understanding, relationships and commitment at senior levels

To establish CAR in each CPP, we had to undertake a range of activities to assure senior management that the methodology would not interfere with service delivery and, in the process, to increase engagement with the programme and build trust in the CAR proposition. A key part of the Fife approach involved creating a strategy group comprised of team leaders, department heads, and key activists who could link the inquiry group work to agendas within their organisations and support inquiry group leads. The strategy group members gave regular updates to their colleagues, elected members, and CPP board to ensure the work remained relevant in their operating context.

The process of gaining support varied across the case sites and even across CAR groups within case sites. For example, to set up the Glasgow Case Study group, the researcher was asked to provide written assurances for the CPP leadership on prospective time commitments, projected costs and benefits, and how the outputs would align with existing workplace demands. This specificity was not required for the Participatory Budgeting CAR group, demonstrating how each CAR group requires a tailored approach.

Nurturing the horizontal relationships within groups and other inquiry activity

A key element of CAR involved bringing together groups of workers, many of whom had not previously worked together, to create a new team to collaborate and co-produce a solution to a problem. For this to be successful, we had to establish ground-rules within the groups and carefully build conversations and relationships across diverse practitioners, services and sectors. Engaging and building relations also involved 'backstage' working beyond the formal inquiry group activities, for example providing encouragement and advice to individual practitioners. This extended beyond those directly involved with CAR, to include the primary strategic contacts in each of the CPPs.

The significant investment of time in backstage work to gain a shared understanding and commitment to CAR was underestimated at the outset of the What Works Scotland programme.

Mapping the vertical and horizontal relationships across partnerships

In order to adapt CAR to the CPP context we had to learn and understand CPP's processes and working practices. This included developing a good understanding of partner organisations and the informal relationships between different organisations and individuals. In each case site we worked with the inquiry group members to develop strategies to connect the inquiry work to a range of agendas, networks and organisations, and ongoing efforts to ensure the practitioners connected the inquiry work to their direct working contexts. This included conducting mapping exercises and developing contextual reports (e.g. at the [June 2015 What Works Scotland event](#)).

Horizontal and vertical re-negotiation was common across all four sites so that the inquiry work remained salient to the participants and partners.

Timescales, autonomy and researcher roles

There was significant diversity across CAR groups in terms of the inquiry process itself, notably around the length of time it took for an inquiry group to establish and the role of practitioners within the group in leading the work. Each inquiry group had different dynamics, with some groups undergoing re-starts that shifted inquiry topics or changed the inquiry group membership. At the extreme, the Fife family inquiry group took over a year to fully form as a group and decide [on a shared inquiry topic](#). It is important to note that this developmental process is an inherent to CAR: ***research questions and CAR groups are not neatly formed in advance.***

Whilst the early ideas for the What Works Scotland CAR workstream assumed a degree of practitioner responsibility for group work tasks, in practice there was little autonomous group working. Most CAR groups relied heavily on the researcher involvement and direction. This placed demands on the researchers who had to both facilitate and motivate the groups, whilst also seeking to capture the 'second order' implications of the CAR work

for PSR. In addition, practitioners and CAR groups required persistent, ongoing active engagement and support in between inquiry group meetings throughout the CAR process, notably through email and in-person meetings with the researcher.

We learned that the success of formal CAR group meetings is contingent on the work done outside the meetings to encourage, clarify and support individual group members for whom the CAR groups are but a small part of their jobs, who each have different prior knowledges, and for each of whom the work of the CAR group has different salience. These activities are underplayed in the CAR literature.

Building a facilitative group culture

Varying expectations and support needs meant that there was divergence in regards to the role of the researcher within inquiry group meetings. Some groups expected 'traditional' meeting practices and leadership (pre-determined agendas and planned sessions that they would simply attend). Our CAR approach focused strongly on group work, disrupting existing meeting practices, and creating spaces for dialogue.

Towards the end of 2016, it was evident from the tension between the public service traditional style of meetings and our attempts to nurture a more dialogical approach, that it would be useful to offer facilitation training (see page 29) to help practitioners improve the quality of communication within meetings in other contexts. A one-day workshop piloted in West Dunbartonshire was later developed into a national two-day training for trainers programme for the four case sites. In this way, the learning from CAR was scaled up to develop generic skills in communication and collaboration applicable in daily public service practice outside CAR.

Section 1 conclusion

Undertaking CAR in inherently dynamic multi-agency policy and practice contexts is challenging. It needs to:

- draw on different theories, methods, models
- be committed to adapting to local contexts, organisations, practitioners and needs
- have the ability to develop methodologically through on-going dialogue
- be supportive of the multiple and complex roles of the researcher-facilitators.

In particular, we would emphasise the following issues.

The role of the researcher-facilitator: CAR in community planning partnerships requires pragmatic innovation by the researcher-facilitator. It demands a highly active role to navigate and embed themselves in the context. It also requires a wide range of relational skills to develop the space and trust required for inquiry work. This includes:

- ensuring the space is protected from, or aligned with, wider and more powerful organisational and policy agendas
- nurturing horizontal relationships and developing vertical relationships
- ‘backstage’ work beyond the work within the CAR groups
- generating and renegotiating diverse working relationships with CAR group members
- adapting to change and wearing a range of ‘hats’ such as broker, negotiator, facilitator, and researcher.

The complex, dynamic context: the CAR experiences described in this section also inform us about what happens when a collaborative approach is taken that, whilst exemplifying the Christie (2011) principles, remains challenging to community planning practitioners and strategists. Working with this cutting-edge collaborative ethos takes application, patience, dialogue, facilitative leadership, and resources. It assumes unpredictability and has no guaranteed outcomes. These are all significant challenges to public service traditions of risk aversion, stability, rational planning, and linear evidence-into-action models, particularly so in the current austerity context with increased staff turnover.

A discursive approach: CAR is also a way of working that challenges some traditional assumptions of evidence-based policy. It goes beyond the limited confines of ‘what works’ to an understanding of policy and practice as fundamentally a discursive activity. It changes ‘what works’ towards a concern for ‘how to work’. As such, it again exemplifies the transition to collaborative governance expressed in Scotland through Christie (2011). CAR is part of this evolution of thinking, working and learning for public service partnerships.

Finally, we offer the following practical reflections for anyone seeking to pursue or commission CAR in these complex public service environments.

Conducting CAR in complex partnerships: key questions and issues

When planning to use CAR as an approach in complex public service partnership settings, researchers will find it is useful to reflect on the below key questions and issues.

1. Needs significant time to build relationship and design processes. Will you be working with existing groups or creating new ones? If you create new CAR groups, you need to factor in time to cultivate the vertical relationships, recruit members, facilitate group dynamics, build inclusive processes, and design processes to achieve goals and which include the diversity of professional backgrounds and perspectives.

2. Commitment to drive CAR forward. In community planning CAR contexts there is a lot of administrative and task-based work required by researcher/facilitators to align diaries, engage with multiple organisations, understand different organisational agendas and temporal rhythms, and support the administrative and coordination work. Consider the work and resources required as well as the skills and time. Who will take ownership for this work – the researcher or a practitioner with the necessary skills? How much time and energy will be required by all involved parties?

3. The essential role of facilitation skills. Groups undertaking a process of inquiry, dialogue and deliberation do not easily self-facilitate. They benefit from a skilled facilitator who is independent and focused on the quality of communication and CAR process, not the substantive issues being discussed. When undertaking inquiries in groups with different professional knowledge and pressures, do you have individuals who have the necessary group facilitation skills? If you plan to research at 'second order', might you need a separate researcher?

4. Training and prior experience. What support and training might you need to offer to conduct CAR with groups with a very broad range of prior research experience – and to maintain involvement by those with different levels of experience? Do CAR group members need previous research or inquiry experience? If so, how will you define this, including formal and experiential knowledge of research and evaluation?

5. Safe spaces for critical conversations. How familiar are group members with ideas such as critical reflection? Is there scope for open conversations about what doesn't work or how decisions are made in the working context? The first is a pre-CAR assessment issue. The second is about establishing 'sanctuary' for the CAR group at the setting up stage of CAR through negotiation with strategic management, and then within the group in terms of establishing 'ground rules' and a safe space.

6. How stable or unstable is the working context for potential CAR group members? How might this impact on the inquiry work, including issues such as staff turnover, reorganizations, stress, workloads, morale, and so forth? How will you mitigate for these risks to the CAR inquiry.

2. Section 2: Three key dimensions of conducting CAR in community planning partnerships - collaboration and participation; research and inquiry; action and change

Introduction

As noted above, there was no simple CAR blueprint. Instead, following CAR principles, we adapted to local contexts, priorities and capacities. We also held onto a shared understanding of CAR, as involving (1) collaboration and participation; (2) research and inquiry; and (3) action and change (adapted from Henderson & Bynner, 2018). Below we explore the significance of these three dimensions.

a. Collaboration and participation

Collaboration and participation had six elements.

i. CAR groups have ‘core’ and ‘periphery’ members

Most of the groups had a core group of members that drove the inquiry group forward, with others having a more peripheral involvement (see [Appendix B](#)). For example, the Fife Welfare inquiry group had 14 core members and 34 peripheral members; in Aberdeen, three core members and 10 report consultees worked to produce the Beyond Action Learning report. In short, where CAR groups endured, developed and functioned, each involved core members who engaged intensely with the process. Yet every group also involved a wider number of individuals with more superficial engagement. The CAR literature commonly implies contributions in action research are equal. CAR in a community planning context cannot expect equal engagement from all inquiry group members.

ii. All CAR groups involved multiple public service collaboration.

It cannot be over-stated: our CAR activities brought together members from across the public services – different organisations, with different cultures and structures. The emphasis on collaboration across organisations and professions is a distinguishing feature. No inquiry group involved a single public service or profession. Service involvement could be wide; for example, the Fife Welfare PIT brought together members from the DWP/Jobcentre Plus; local authority community learning and development, policy, research; CARF (Citizens Advice and Rights Fife); Fife Gingerbread and housing services. Others were narrower, such as the Glasgow Case Study group, which involved Democratic Services, housing associations, health, a community activist, and Cultural Services ([Appendix B](#)). Our CAR approach

therefore mirrored the cross-sector collaborative aspirations of public service reform in Scotland.

iii. All CAR groups sought to involve staff across different layers of management and operational service delivery.

The CAR groups drew from across the workforce. Placing CAR participants in the four sites into Office of National Statistics (ONS) categories demonstrates how the groups brought together senior managers with staff with operational roles. As an example, the Glasgow Participatory Budgeting inquiry group involved (ONS categories):

- managers, directors and senior officials
- professional occupations
- associate professional and technical occupations
- administrative and secretarial occupations.

One of the smaller CAR groups in Aberdeenshire, a group of three working on the Beyond Action Learning report, was inevitably less diverse, including only the ONS categories of managers, directors and senior officials; and professional occupations.³ This illustrates how CAR can create innovative spaces for collaboration between practitioners with varying levels of formal authority, and with diverse skillsets and experience.

iv. All CAR groups included members with diverse levels of previous research experience

We did not select CAR group members based on previous experience of doing research, working with a particular type of evidence, working with universities, or using CAR techniques such as critical reflection. Some CAR groups contained people with higher research degrees and members with no higher education. In order to sustain collaboration and participation, facilitation of the groups needed to be very active. Other techniques included modelling inquiry processes; teaching basic research design and data collection techniques; and seeking to identify and draw on local capacity to provide peer support and learning across CAR groups.

v. All CAR groups involved a researcher-facilitator external to CPP structures.

Each researcher played a number of roles in each inquiry group, being facilitators, researchers, encouraging people to think critically about evidence and to ask good research questions, and seeking robust research designs. We also, at times, had to take on the role of advocate, speaking up for group members in meetings with managers and helping people

³ Although consultation on the report increased the diversity of participation.

develop the autonomy to work within the groups. Sometimes, individual inquiry group members took the lead on the facilitation aspects of the work.

This presents a challenge: whether CAR in CPPs has the potential to be sustained independently of an external, trained researcher-facilitator. An external researcher-facilitator has the training to energise CAR over time. They can pursue research rigour, across diverse groups of practitioners, and with independence from internal partnership tensions and interests. This would be challenging in terms of workload, skillset, and organisational politics for an internal research-facilitator. It was clear, however, that some practitioners were learning from the action research process with What Works Scotland and then seeking to apply it in their own collaborative working:

“There’s been a lot of learning has come from the work that you (WWS) have done here and elsewhere. The biggest bit of learning I’ve got has been about the level of resource you put in to facilitate something. At first it struck me as being over the top, now when I look at it, I think, I can see why you would want to have different people with clear functions.” [Participant in Aberdeenshire Learning Events]

The role of the researcher-facilitator is essential. CAR requires the group to include one or more members with combined facilitation skills, research-training abilities, and research skills, and with the autonomy to put these into action with others. The [What Works Scotland Facilitative Leadership Training programme](#) targeted at small groups of practitioners in the four case sites developed from the recognition that the skills required for enabling participation are often overlooked or taken for granted. In particular, this relates to the value of facilitating good dialogue, focussed deliberation, and strategic thinking about process design. The principles and skills of facilitation also entail a different attitude of mind and commitment to the ‘wisdom of the crowd’⁴. The ability to support groups to conduct research, generate research questions, pursue them with sufficient robustness, analyse and take action accordingly requires a separate skillset in addition to facilitation skills.

vi. Cultivation of cross-case site learning.

Cross-CPP inquiry group exchange was integral to the CAR approach, seeking to cultivate ongoing practitioner networks post-What Works Scotland involvement. We held national What Works Scotland CAR events, attended by CAR group participants from all four case sites, including activities to develop cross-learning and collective development. We sought to develop a CAR Community of Practice through the Perth National Event ((Brunner et al,

⁴ For more information on Facilitative Leadership Training see What Works Scotland the blog <http://whatworksscotland.blogspot.com/2017/05/facilitative-leadership-involving-citizens-and-communities-in-local-decision-making.html>

2016). In another form of cross-CPP engagement, the Glasgow PB group, with What Works Scotland support, generated a Glasgow/Fife joint CAR group who gathered PB evaluation evidence from Paris. This led to Glasgow/Fife practitioner presentations impacting across Scotland.

What Works Scotland also brought inquiry group members together with other interested public service practitioners in an ongoing series of [evidence, topic-based and thematic seminars](#) where they have been able to exchange ideas informally across different partners. For large-scale CAR projects, crossing service areas and authority boundaries, we demonstrated that cross-site collaboration is feasible, but requires active facilitation and resources.

Conclusion – collaboration and participation

- All CAR groups involved multiple members, each with varying degrees of involvement. Key to the success of CAR groups were core members, who committed to the process; but other participants were also essential to deepening analysis and disseminating the learning.
- CAR activities brought together members from across public service organisations, cultures and structures. The emphasis on collaboration within the CAR group mirrored the collaborative aspirations of PSR in Scotland.
- CAR can create a space for innovation and collaboration across practitioners of varying seniority, experiences and knowledge.
- All CAR groups included members with diverse prior involvement in undertaking research. Facilitation of groups was essential to sustaining inclusion.
- Each What Works Scotland researcher played a range of key roles in each inquiry group including as facilitators, researchers and advocates. Researcher facilitation poses a key challenge as to whether CAR in CPPs has the potential to be sustained independently of external input
- Cross-CAR group exchange and learning was integral to the What Works Scotland CAR approach. This demonstrates the potential for wider and ongoing collaboration stemming from initiating a CAR programme.

b. Research and inquiry

The research and inquiry element of our CAR approach had five prominent characteristics:

i. The most abundant types of evidence used to inform the CAR inquiries were experiential and local knowledge.

Experiential, practical experience of local practitioners and local knowledge, obtained through various forms of local data such as qualitative interviews, desk research,

questionnaires, and reflective writing, were most commonly used across the CAR groups. Other types of evidence used were statistical and desk-based sources; and national and international evidence reviews.

These findings are supported by a separate What Works Scotland study that examined how evidence and data becomes meaningful for public service professionals working at the front-line of public service reform⁵. This study found that the craft knowledge of frontline workers developed through years of experience of working in the community was the most highly valued form of knowledge. Practitioners questioned the relevance of academic research and argued that in practice empirical data needed to be translated and contextualised to be meaningful and useful in a community planning context⁶.

A key role for the What Works Scotland researchers working with CAR groups was in both brokering access to knowledge resources and supporting analysis of data so that the evidence could be made meaningful, and was contextualised and relevant.

ii. The usefulness of evidence reviews in the CAR inquiries.

CAR groups also drew on evidence reviews, including from the wider What Works Scotland programme, as part of their work. Aberdeenshire and Fife used [the What Works Scotland Review of Partnership Working Across UK Public Services](#) (Cook, 2015). The Glasgow PB group [analysed a review of participatory budgeting](#) (Harkins & Escobar, 2016). This evidence was shared through What Works Scotland events and seminars and where CAR participants learnt about the studies, and the researchers bringing this new evidence to the attention of the groups. Similarly, other evidence reviews were drawn into the CAR inquiries. NHS Health Scotland's [review of the evidence on best value preventative approaches](#) (Craig, 2014) and a UK-wide review of [community-led approaches to reducing poverty](#) (Crisp et al., 2016). Evidence reviews, and activities to explain findings to practitioners, therefore offer a strong data source for CAR work.

iii. Managing the tension between instrumental and conceptual uses of evidence.

The status of evidence is highly contextual and dependent on different conventions, which vary across organisations and individuals. A classic distinction used when discussing evidence use is that of instrumental and conceptual uses. Instrumental knowledge is

⁵ Making data meaningful research available at <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/making-data-meaningful/>

⁶ For more information on knowledge types and knowledge mobilization see Vicky Ward's presentation- Unravelling the Evidence to Action Maze <http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/E2AUnravellingTheEvidenceToActionMazePresentation.pdf>

research knowledge that policymakers use directly to inform a decision, while conceptual evidence can influence how issues are perceived (Langer et al. 2016).

These competing academic and practitioner demands have to be balanced, and seeking a balance of conceptual and instrumental research was one of our key roles. As an example, in the Glasgow Case Study group, the researcher had to work with the practitioners to support them in producing and valuing conceptual insights from qualitative research. This was a challenge to the quantitative performance measurement approach traditionally pursued. In West Dunbartonshire, the evaluation approach was designed using a theory of change which made explicit the ‘theories’ underpinning planned activities. This helped practitioners to move beyond their original focus on measuring performance and meeting implementation goals to reflecting on their assumptions about how planned interventions might lead to change and if the evidence supported these assumptions they had gathered.

A common phenomenon in policymaking is the use of evidence to support existing viewpoints to justify existing policy rather than seeking to find new, evidence-informed interventions (Allen 2016; Stevens 2011). The CAR approach pursued through What Works Scotland provided a degree of ‘sanction and sanctuary’⁷ (Dickens & Watkins, 1999) from the pressure to fit new research into the established consensus or framework of thinking. It presented opportunities for practitioners to unpack the contradictions and challenges involved in seeking to implement elements of public service reform such as community empowerment. This includes working at a time of public spending constraint. Some of the researchers drew on the Christie Commission narrative to legitimise wider questioning of the status quo and consideration of evidence.

Nevertheless, CAR is not immune from strong institutional pressures to produce research that provides answers to immediate practical policy problems. As a case in point, in Aberdeenshire one CAR group began to develop a topic for inquiry, but then had to change course to respond to the more immediate needs of the CPP board to develop a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP) as required by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015.

iv. Interpretation and analysis of research and evidence was both participatory and researcher-led.

The ideal of CAR seeks to blur the boundaries between the roles of the researcher and the participants. In practice, we used a mix of practitioner-led (participants conduct and lead on

⁷ Provided by winning senior management commitment to undertaking and sustaining a process (sanction) and a related commitment to creating ‘safe’ spaces within that process for deepening, informed and critical discussions (sanctuary) (Dickens & Watkins, 1999).

their own research), researcher-led (driven by the What Works Scotland researcher) and more participatory activities (equal participation of participants and researcher).

The Community Links Worker Inquiry team in Aberdeenshire adopted a participatory approach throughout the process. The researcher and participants jointly discussed research reports on community linking, conducted interviews, and took part in a study visit and coded analysis of interviews. Participatory analysis was used to derive key report themes with a shared writing process to develop an early draft and discussion of responses. While it is possible to maintain commitment to participatory approaches throughout the research process, the balance of researcher-led and participant-led research can also shift and change at different stages of the CAR process and in response to the needs and capacity of CAR participants.

In Fife and Glasgow, the researchers designed bespoke training and materials in research methods for practitioner-led research. In the West Dunbartonshire CAR activity, participants led on data collection; a participatory approach was taken to the analysis of data; and the researcher led on the report writing stage. In our experience, the roles of researcher and participants in CAR groups are not as simple to blur as the ideal of action research suggests, and tends to require the researcher-facilitator to steer the process.

v. The inquiry work supported critical thinking about evaluation of programmes.

We did not intend to undertake evaluation or train public service staff in how to evaluate. Our roles as researcher-facilitator were to encourage the CAR groups to engage in critical learning and reflection whilst generating evidence. However, in some cases, we used formal tools or action research approaches to support an inquiry group to work through how they might evaluate an initiative, this being embedded into the CAR inquiry.

In West Dunbartonshire, for example, contribution analysis was used to evaluate the existing neighbourhood programme and to create a means for practitioners to develop a clearer narrative of change. In Glasgow, considering the principles of evaluating processes and outcomes were core to the work on participatory budgeting. However, the CAR activities in relation to evaluation, including the complementary activities (for example evaluability assessment with Glasgow CPP, see [Appendix B](#)) focussed on supporting public service workers to think for themselves about the theories of change they were employing, or evaluation methods and measurements, and to produce them collaboratively. The work in relation to evaluation therefore sought to set in place the opportunity for stronger critical thinking on evaluation by public services beyond the inquiry process.

Conclusion – research and inquiry

- The evidence used in CAR inquiries was mainly experiential and local knowledge. Other types of evidence included statistical and desk-based sources; and evidence reviews. The use of evidence reviews proved valuable in framing events, discussions, analysis and report writing. A key role for the researchers was in both brokering access to knowledge resources and supporting analysis of data.
- A CAR approach can help to maintain a balance between instrumental (applied) knowledge and conceptual (theoretical) knowledge. This is supported by the role of an external researcher-facilitator by creating safe spaces for more critical framing of discussions and offering specialist skills and knowledge to support CAR groups.
- The ideal of CAR seeks to blur the boundaries between and roles of the researcher and the participants. The What Works Scotland CAR approach was both participatory (participants conduct and lead on their own research) and researcher-led (driven by the researcher- facilitator). The distinction between researcher and CAR participants in this context is difficult to blur, and changes over time.
- With some CAR groups, we used evaluation tools to support participants in considering how they might evaluate an initiative. Here, CAR proved valuable not as an approach to evaluation in itself but as a process that helped to frame the criteria for evaluation in more critical, reflective ways.

c. Action and change

The third key principle, action and change, had three prominent characteristics.

i. CAR groups produced both formal outputs and creative outputs.

The work in each case site allowed exploration of a range of strategies to support change, reflecting local priorities and contexts, including outputs that were less concerned to report learning or findings in traditional and formalised ways. Each inquiry group produced a ‘basic model’ of an output, a record of knowledge such as a research report⁸ or event report that recorded the research process and findings. Groups also produced creative outputs with the support of What Works Scotland such as short films and video reports; and infographics⁹; and inquiry group members additionally developed or participated in influencing strategies

⁸ Formal reports included: Aberdeenshire: Community Links Worker inquiry team report ; Fife: Schools Partnership inquiry team report; Glasgow: two Case Studies; and, West Dunbartonshire: Insights from ‘Your Community’ – a place-based approach to public service reform report

⁹ Creative outputs included: Aberdeenshire: Beyond Action Learning 10-point discursive ‘how to’-type publication and related blog-piece; Fife: welfare PIT blogs (x 2) using statistical data and conveying experience of undertaking a welfare inquiry; Glasgow: a practice-focused toolkit for evaluation of Participatory Budgeting initiatives; and, West Dunbartonshire: info-graphic on what works in community-led action planning.

such as engaging in dialogue across the CPP to share and reflect on the draft findings from CAR groups¹⁰.

The integration of collaboration, action and research through CAR processes offers a more creative canvas for outputs than offered by traditional research approaches.

ii. Two levels of change-making: systems-change and developing research skills.

There was commonality across the four case sites in relation to generating change expanding beyond the work of the CAR groups themselves: **(a) seeking systems-change, (b) developing research skills.**

(a) Systems-change

Some of the CAR work in each of the case sites sought change across a partnership structure or system. For example:

- Aberdeenshire: the focus on a series of developmental CAR activities aimed to bring different 'layers' of partnership-working together (central, local area, local community) to explore evidence for preventative approaches to inequality.
- Fife: the strategy group sought to share the learning from CAR inquiries to influence wider organisational changes (such as through the Fife Council reform processes and community planning activities). They shared their learning with the CPP Board, elected members and senior management and recommended future ways of working to meet 'Christie' and take forward public service reform locally.
- Glasgow: the Evaluability Assessment of the Thriving Places initiative brought together 25 officers working at multiple levels in the CPP to develop a theory of change.
- West Dunbartonshire: a range of activities to create spaces for dialogue across different departments, public sector and third sector partners locally and nationally included a development day on community-led planning; training on 'community conversations that matter'; and a seminar on community-led approaches to tackling poverty.

However, the learning and potential could be embraced by individual officers but not necessarily across the wider system (Brunner, Craig, Watson, forthcoming). The role of CAR

¹⁰ Aberdeenshire – use of draft reports for consultations to stimulate wider reflectivity across CPP and discussion of the Beyond Action Learning report with senior manager; Glasgow/Fife Participatory Budgeting Paris visit - inquiry group members participating in a film of the visit; Fife – Briefings with recommendations for CPP (Welfare inquiry group); West Dunbartonshire – video report on community-led approaches to inform a Development Day; and, all four case sites - blog pieces on the CAR work.

evidence in generating systems change is uncertain and is a valuable area for future research.

(b) Research skills development

The inquiry group work included individual or collective opportunities for developing and/or practicing research skills that can be re-applied in other contexts. Examples include interviewing skills¹¹; writing vignettes¹²; devising and evaluating case studies and peer reviewing the writing of other CAR group members¹³.

The ambition for CAR to influence change in public services through working with evidence tends to impact in smaller, longer-term and unanticipated ways rather than through 'grand plans'. For example, introducing ideas through a report that are shared over time across a system. These exist alongside other CAR drivers for change, such as individual skills development and culture change around evidence-use. The exploratory nature of the What Works Scotland CAR programme has allowed these layers of change-making to become visible, suggesting the future potential for CAR in comparable collaborative governance contexts.

iii. Outcomes from CAR can be evaluated in terms of the ability to evolve and secure relevance over time.

Given the complexities of partnership and collaborative working and the resource limits, individuality and small numbers of practitioners involved in CAR processes, it is not possible to attribute longer-term outcomes such as impact on service performance, quality, or wider social and economic outcomes to CAR processes (see for instance, Cook, 2015).

What is, however, apparent across the four case sites in terms of CAR and outcomes is the evolving nature of the CAR process and the potential for partners in each case site to learn over time from their early CAR experiences, and generate approaches to evidence generation and interpretation relevant to their needs.

Examples include:

- In Aberdeenshire, multi-layered preventative partnership working developed from early scoping work, through Development Days with the Board, then Learning Days with wider CPP structures.

¹¹ Aberdeenshire: study visit to Community Links Worker pilot project and interviewing. West Dunbartonshire: training in interviewing in order to produce some video material for an event.

¹² Fife: the Welfare PIT developed and used vignettes in order to support discussions on difficult subjects with practitioners

¹³ Glasgow: the Thriving Places case study development group members

- In Fife, each of the three CAR groups re-shaped their early thinking and development into more relevant local research. The practitioner members also, over time, [reflected on issues and took ownership for group dynamics and collaborative leadership](#).
- In Glasgow, the PB Evaluation Toolkit inquiry group evolved into a PB international study visit to Paris, in collaboration with Fife.
- In West Dunbartonshire, a request from management for front-line staff to conduct an evaluation of the Your Community approach provided the impetus for a new CAR group inquiry. The focus was an evaluation of Your Community using a method known as ‘contribution analysis’.

The flexibility of the CAR approach enabled action and change within and beyond the CAR groups.

Conclusion - action and change

The CAR groups generated formal and more creative outputs and achieved both internal and external change-making. The evidence suggests that the impact of CAR on influencing change in public services tends to be smaller, longer-term and in ways that are unanticipated rather than leading to ‘grand plans’. This requires further research.

Given the complexities of collaborative working, it is difficult to attribute longer-term impacts on service performance or wider outcomes to these CAR interventions. What can be seen is the evolving, adaptive nature of the CAR process and the potential for CPP partners to learn from early experiences to explore opportunities and to generate further projects, applicable to changing contexts. CAR builds local capacity to work with current challenges and future aspirations for collaborative governance.

Section 2 conclusion

In this section, we have made visible the potential for CAR to combine collaboration, research and action that informs and supports the evidence-informed, collaborative governance model aspired to by the Christie Commission.

We offer the following concluding thoughts:

Collaboration and participation

CAR provides an opportunity and space to build diverse groups that can bring together different partners and services, those from management and from service delivery, and actors with varying degrees (and none) of existing research experience. In so doing, an

independent researcher-facilitator is crucial, although others too can play key facilitating (or research) roles.

In developing collaboration and participation through CAR in these complex public service environments, we point to the value of communities of practice: CAR practitioners linking to other practitioners and CAR projects across Scotland; and the What Works Scotland Facilitative Leadership Training programme that has sought to build a wider network of practitioners within CPPs of skills in facilitation, dialogue and deliberation.

Research and inquiry

CAR inquiries tend to draw on local knowledge, data and practice experience, but the use of evidence can be broadened by drawing on evidence reviews and on wider networks of practitioners and researchers. The role of an independent researcher-facilitator is valuable here in supporting analysis of material by the group – including both applied problem-solving (instrumental) and more critical, reflective problem-framing (conceptual).

In terms of supporting the development of research and inquiry work through CAR within these complex public service environments, sustained support from senior and strategic management is essential, so that CAR groups have the protected space and time to examine the research evidence and think critically about the design and implementation of their public service reform programmes.

Action and change

CAR offers a creative space for CAR groups to consider, explore and test diverse change-making activities. It also enables explicit working for systems change and developing research and related skills, each enabling ongoing influence outside of CAR projects and over time.

Seeking to evaluate the actions and a change within CPPs resulting from CAR activity is challenging – as for any intervention seeking to influence and impact on complex public service partnerships (Cook, 2015). However, mapping influences over time and exploring how CAR leads to the development of further work and learning would be a valuable next step.

3. Section 3: The potential of CAR to inform public service reform – developing effective practice and providing critical insights

In this final section, we apply the insights from sections 1 and 2 of this paper to a broader consideration of the potential for CAR to support and inform the development of PSR in Scotland – in particular through work with CPPs.

We do this in two steps:

- First, returning to the ‘Christie principles’ and considering what we have learnt about how CAR can support the develop of each of these – both practically and more critically
- Second, considering what we have learnt about the wider challenges of using CAR to pursue public service reform and collaborative governance in the context of ‘austerity’.

a. CAR and its potential roles in relation to the four pillars of Christie

Our [Introduction](#) pointed to the context of public service reform in Scotland built around the four pillars argued for by the Christie Commission (2011) and validated by the Scottish Government (2011). Here, we consider each pillar in relation to what we have learnt from undertaking CAR within the four case sites.

i. Partnership working

CAR supports partnership working by:

- Offering a space for learning and working together to build a shared collaborative ethos across diverse partners: supporting CPP partners – including staff at both operational and strategic layers – to develop further skills and knowledge for collaboration, relational working and facilitative leadership.
- Engaging with senior strategic management to support and sustain collaboration and partnership working: through building ongoing dialogue at this level as to the realities of this way of working, including highlighting resources required, time taken, non-linear processes, and the need for strategic leaders across services to provide ‘sanction and sanctuary’ for effective collaboration.
- Providing a range of learning opportunities for capacity-building , skills and knowledge: not only those relating to collaborative working and facilitation, but also

those relating to research and inquiry, organisational change, policy context, as well as the policy and practice focus of the inquiry.

ii. People (and participation)

CAR supports people (and participation) by:

- helping to build a shared ethos of collaborative and participative working: our work illustrates that CAR can provide spaces for collaboration across CPP partners concerned for this ethos. They can adapt the learning and skills gained in their work with service users, communities and citizens.
- highlighting the value of facilitation skills to support collaborative working and improve the quality of dialogue and deliberation in partnership work
- integrating staff knowledge, sources of evidence and pooling resources and budgets in a unifying process: this potential could be championed in future by other national bodies working in the evidence to action and knowledge mobilisation field
- highlighting the value of investing in local staff to develop more reflective and critical practice: What Works Scotland has invested in cultivating and supporting opportunities for individual reflection and related dialogue through writing, reading and facilitated discussion in both local and national contexts. These investments in people hold the potential to deepen considerations of evidence, support development of complex practice, and increase engagement with the wider policy context.

iii. Performance

CAR supports performance by:

- **Facilitating a shift from traditional, linear assumptions and models of evidence-based policy-making toward more practice-focused and context-sensitive evidence-use.** Our CAR inquiry work illustrates the use by practitioners of a range of evidence – practice-based knowledge, community knowledge, local data, statistical data, national and international evidence, and primary evidence. It holds the potential to develop practitioner reflection on what is useful, how, where and when; so a deepening engagement and understanding of evidence-use.
- **Developing communities of practice.** There is untapped potential in developing communities of practice across services and geographical areas. These are networks of people sharing learning and dialogue on common areas of action, practice and policy. The cross-site CAR work, including What Works Scotland national events and the Paris participatory budgeting learning visit, demonstrate the value of this form of peer support and networking around key topics and areas of public service reform such as participatory budgeting, as practitioners seek to improve performance together.

- **Supporting learning from what doesn't work ... 'failure':** CAR is a participatory process of 'making meaning together' and creating 'sanctuary' for services to talk openly with each other about what is and isn't working. This form of inquiry supports consideration of alternatives based on a process of research and collaborative learning. Both 'failure' and 'success' were outcomes of the CAR work, and both offered potential for learning.
- **Leveraging-in evidence support.** Where there is local commitment, continuity and openness, our research suggests that CAR can foster the commitment of local practitioners and partners to engage with wider evidence and related support from local, regional and national agencies (e.g. statistical data, evidence reviews); and that CAR can facilitate improved use of such data to support performance and evaluation improvement.

iv. Prevention

In most of our case sites, prevention did not emerge as a topic for a group inquiry. However, CAR has the potential to offer insights into this highly demanding area of local policy and practice by:

- **Understanding – making visible – the challenges of preventing inequalities and 'preventative approaches'.** Our CAR work helps to highlight the complexity of these challenges for those working in collaborative partnerships. For example, in collectively understanding the potential of different areas of upstream, preventative working and the related evidence-bases; considering how to pool resources across multiple public service bodies; and understanding what is realistic for CPPs to achieve given limitations of local resources.
- **Offering an approach for CPPs to build over the longer-term a body of preventative practices and strategies.** CAR groups could be used in future to focus on the incremental work across public services bodies that engages with 'wicked issues' and seeks to understand collectively through collaboration, research and action how to build preventative strategies.¹⁴

b. CAR and wider insights into public service reform in the context of austerity

The shift towards the Christie principles of partnership, people, performance and prevention is part of growing international aspirations and trends towards 'new public

¹⁴ For instance, see the developing discussions and challenges within Aberdeenshire CPP in relation to preventative working via: through the Scoping Report; the *Community Links Worker inquiry report*, *Multi-layer preventative partnership-working report*; and *Reflective Learning Report (final)*.

governance’, ‘new public services’, and ‘collaborative governance’ (Osborne, 2013; Denhardt & Denhardt, 2015; Ansell et al., 2017).

There is a renewed commitment to the role of the local state in leading and facilitating public service reform in partnership with other public and third sector organisations; and through participation or co-production with citizens, communities and service users. The value-base that underlies this shared, collaborative approach is not simply a concern for cost-efficiencies or responding to top-down policy targets but to engage with all relevant stakeholders, improve local accountability and advance social and economic outcomes.

This has coincided with a period of austerity in the UK, which has reduced public service budgets and resulted in increased re-organisation and ‘churn’ amongst public service workers (Hastings et al, 2015).

At the same time, there is also a wider policy narrative in Scotland and further afield concerned for enhancing collaborative and facilitative leadership. This resonates with the research philosophy, values and practices of CAR. The CAR work, therefore, offers the potential for wider insights into the challenges of developing collaborative and facilitative public service reform in the context of austerity.

Here, we discuss three dimensions of learning from the CAR programme on common PSR challenges; austerity; and the impacts of the discrete CAR projects on PSR activities nationally and internationally.

i. Connecting CAR projects together reveals how discrete topics hold common challenges.

What Works Scotland did not impose topics or themes on the CPPs. Their choices about what to work with us on in the CAR groups reinforces how broad the Christie agenda is and how many choices of focus CPPs have in order to put it into operation. However, at the What Works Scotland Perth national event (Brunner et al, 2016) a dominant theme was that whilst the CAR groups each had unique topics, and the CPPs individual priorities and problems, they had common challenges. These centred on issues of working with social complexity; with multiple public service reform projects; and trying to improve day-to-day ways of working through the Christie principles of partnership, co-production, collaboration and improving performance whilst commonly working within the circumstances of austerity (Brunner et al, 2016, p.1). This demonstrates the value of bringing public service practitioners out of the local and into the national arena, being able to see the bigger picture and understand local issues more strategically.

ii. The CAR work revealed how PSR is constrained by austerity.

The CAR work in all four CPPs was shaped by the wider contexts of employment insecurity and the UK austerity programme, which overshadows public service reform and putting ‘Christie’ into practice. Inquiry group participants noted that reduced budgets meant that

there was now a sense of “moving from prevention back to firefighting” (Brunner et al, 2016, p.16). They argued that the loss of key staff caused problems, including a lack of knowledge transfer when people moved on. In its CAR work, What Works Scotland saw tensions between public services trying to work in a collaborative, partnership-based, long-term, localised and preventative way, but within a context of efficiency gains, performance measurement, short-term contracts and reductions of services and staff. The metaphor of ‘building on sand’ resonated with CAR participants, who experienced little sense of control, instead facing ‘change fatigue’: *“building partnerships, developing trust, takes time – but we are not given this”* (ibid, p.17).

Building effective dialogue and relationships is difficult when organisations are undergoing regular reforms and reorganisations, and persistent staffing changes and insecurity. Cultivating trusting collaborative relationships and ‘seeing evidence through’ needs reasonable time and therefore reasonable stability (Soutar, Warrander & Henderson, 2017). Bringing local CR participants together enables these patterns to be made visible.

iii. CAR has impacted on public service reform activities and debates across Scotland and beyond

Evidencing impact is complex, given the diverse nature of CAR and local contexts. In addition, the local character of CAR might lead to the understanding that the impacts of CAR are only local. However, some outputs from the case sites have also been used to make diverse contributions to public service reform programmes in Scotland and beyond.

Some examples include:

- The Glasgow and Fife international PB study visit has led to multiple disseminations by inquiry group participants to other PB practitioners (e.g. Community Planning Network in Scotland; Local Area Research and Intelligence Association; PB Scotland Conference; Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland; Jam & Justice (Greater Manchester); [Montreuil \(blog\)](#)).
- The Community Links Worker inquiry (Aberdeenshire HSCP & What Works Scotland, 2016) has contributed to the Scottish Government’s national links worker research and policy development programme.
- In West Dunbartonshire, the evaluation of the Your Community programme identified training needs of local practitioners, and was developed by What Works Scotland into a national programme of facilitative leadership.

This demonstrates that CAR programmes, when developed with facilitated activities to bring local CAR participants together as a prospective community of practice, and with mechanisms for drawing out and capturing wider conceptual findings (Brunner et al, 2016), can achieve two elements in relation to public service reform. First, they can both underpin and simultaneously critique public service reform activities. Second, they can move from affecting the very local and topical, to influencing the national and strategic.

Section 3 conclusion

We have illustrated from our CAR work in the field and our wider cross-site dialogue, how CAR can inform, influence and impact on the four pillars of the Christie Commission agenda and more widely on PSR and collaborative governance in Scotland.

In particular, we argue:

Partnership-working: the potential of CAR to support CPPs in developing the building blocks for multi-sector public service partnership working by: working for the active longer-term commitment across senior management; creating a collaborative ethos and building capacity to take this forward.

People (and participation): the potential of CAR to support collaborative working with individual staff and teams and participative working – with citizens, people using services, and communities. CAR offers spaces to explore new strategies to bring together ‘resources’ across CPPs – staffing, budgets, evidence, and communities – in new and creative ways.

Performance: the potential of CAR to facilitate CPPs in shifting from ‘traditional’ linear assumptions about using evidence – and what makes for ‘good evidence’ – to building local collaborative capacity to work with diverse sources of evidence in more reflective and critical ways. CAR can support wider communities of practice that can deepen support for this richer, diverse form of evidencing. CAR can also provide safe spaces to consider the sensitive issue of ‘failure’.

Prevention: the potential of CAR to provide emerging insights into this highly demanding area of local policy and practice by: providing a long-term vehicle or spaces for the incremental working across CPPs and other partnerships to build collaborative and participative structures that can engage with upstream, ‘wicked’, and complex social issues.

Wider insights from CAR into the development of collaborative governance and PSR in Scotland:

- the need for significant commitment and support within CPPs to develop a collaborative, partnership-working culture – in particular across senior management within CPP partners;
- the importance for staff teams across CPP partners of ‘reasonable job stability’ – rather than workforce insecurity – to support their capacity to benefit from the learning that CAR offers;
- a move away from traditional, linear assumptions and models of evidence-based policy to a richer and shared use of evidence across Scotland.
- an openness to critical as well as pragmatic thinking and related to this a willingness to share learning – ‘success’ and ‘failure’ – more widely across Scotland.

CAR is not the 'solution' to either developing collaborative governance or coping with the impacts of austerity programmes. Instead, we argue and illustrate that in this uncertain and demanding policy context, CAR offers one perspective through which to build longer-term collaborative approaches to the inter-related and complex challenges of PSR, evidence-gathering, and improving outcomes for citizens.

4. Conclusion

This working paper has shared findings from the What Works Scotland programme of collaborative action research (CAR). CAR is a way of working that challenges traditional approaches to research and evidence. As a process of partnership working for evidence-informed change, it exemplifies the transition to collaborative governance argued for by the Christie Commission (2011). The paper has explored the potential of CAR to support and inform – both practically and critically – the developing approach to collaborative governance in Scotland.

A shared perspective, rather than a single model, underpinned the What Works Scotland CAR approach. It integrated three key dimensions: collaboration and participation; research and inquiry; and action and change. As an innovative approach to research, and as an ‘offer’ from What Works Scotland rather than a response to demand from CPPs, there were challenges in getting ‘buy in’ to this method of research-practice from strategic managers and public service practitioners. Animating the process required the What Works Scotland researchers to work intensively and persistently on design, preparation, facilitation and the relational and ‘backstage’ work to support the CAR groups. The intensity of this work was heightened by the complex contexts of public service partnership working in general, and austerity in particular.

This programme demonstrated the potential of CAR to bring together a range of partners and services, management and frontline staff, and those with varying research experience. The CAR groups engaged with a wide variety of evidence to inform how they tackled local public service reform. This included local knowledge and data, local practice experience, evidence reviews, and other regional and national resources. CAR practitioners generated both practical problem-solving knowledge and more critical, reflective, problem-framing knowledge, to inform policy development and implementation, both locally and more widely. In addition, the CAR programme demonstrated the role of the independent researcher-facilitator in driving the process and maintaining momentum. Connecting and linking CAR projects together through communities of practice and training in facilitation skills supported the potential for wider impact beyond the CAR programme.

CAR demonstrates the value of bringing professionals and practitioners from very different backgrounds together into one group to co-produce work involving diverse sources of knowledge and evidence. The value given to the knowledge and evidence of different people in the system is unequal. It is easy to overlook how important it can be to bring people into the same room and into a co-production process where their knowledge, skills and experience are valued equally. When it is well facilitated, CAR is an approach that enables knowledge and evidence from people in different levels and roles in the organisation to be heard and valued more equally.

Future research needs to map over time how involvement in CAR groups influences practitioners' future working and evidence-gathering practices. Research should also explore how inquiry group findings and practices impact over time at local, national and international levels, including how their work may affect how collaborative governance operates.

Our findings suggest that CAR has potential to support and inform the development of PSR as a form of collaborative governance through building local collaborative capacity that can critically engage with evidence and provide wider insights. At present, however, the benefits of CAR for exemplifying and informing PSR are challenged by public service budget cuts, restructuring and high levels of staff turnover. There is a need for skill and flexibility in the application of CAR in response to these contemporary challenges, alongside the inherent needs of local contexts. Our research suggests that CAR is more likely to realise its potential where there is workforce stability, twinned with commitment to longer-term development of the approach from strategic decision-makers, and increased readiness of local partnerships to undertake CAR.

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What Works Scotland – Our approach to collaborative action research

<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/the-project/our-approach-to-collaborative-action-research/>

What works in Community Profiling? Initial reflections from the What Works Scotland project in West Dunbartonshire

<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/what-works-in-community-profiling-initial-reflections-from-the-wws-project-in-west-dunbartonshire/>

Operation Modulus: putting Christie into practice in Gorbals

<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/operation-modulus-putting-christie-into-practice-in-the-gorbals/>

The Operation Modulus Approach: further lessons for public service reform
<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/the-operation-modulus-approach-further-lessons-for-public-service-reform/>

Collaborative Action Retreat Report – Summary of retreat held in June 2015
<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/collaborative-action-retreat-report/>

Collaborative Action Research Report: Fife Partnership Innovation Team exploring the Family Fun Model
<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/collaborative-action-research-report-fife-partnership-innovation-team-exploring-the-family-fun-model>

Blog post: Facilitative Leadership: Involving citizens and communities in local decision-making
<http://whatworksscotland.blogspot.com/2017/05/facilitative-leadership-involving-citizens-and-communities-in-local-decision-making.html>

What Works Scotland – Past events
<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/events/past-events/>

Partnership working across UK public services
<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/partnership-working-across-uk-public-services/>

Review of First Generation Participatory Budgeting in Scotland
<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/review-of-first-generation-participatory-budgeting-in-scotland/>

Best preventative investments for Scotland – what the evidence and experts say
<https://www.scotphn.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/24575-Best-Preventative-Investments-For-Scotland-What-The-Evidence-And-Experts-Say-Dec-20141.pdf>

Community-led Approaches to Reducing Poverty in Neighbourhoods
<https://www4.shu.ac.uk/research/cresr/ourexpertise/community-led-approaches-tackling-poverty>

Reflections and Learning from the Fife Collaborative Action Research Programme 2015-2017
<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/reflections-and-learning-from-the-fife-collaborative-action-research-programme/>

Continuing to learn from international experiences of participatory budgeting
<http://whatworksscotland.blogspot.com/2018/11/continuing-to-learn-from-international-experiences-of-participatory-budgeting.html>

Learning about community capacity-building from the Community Links Worker approach in
Insch, Aberdeenshire (2013-16): a collaborative action research inquiry (cycle 1)
<https://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/learning-about-community-capacity-building-from-community-links-worker-approach-aberdeenshire/>

Exploring collaborative learning, research and action in public service reform: Aberdeenshire
Health and Social Care Change Fund Beyond Action Learning initiative
<https://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/collaborative-learning-research-and-action-in-public-service-reform/>

Available (once published) from the What Works Scotland Aberdeenshire case site webpage
<https://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/casesites/aberdeenshire/>

Inquiring into Multi-layered, Preventative Partnership
<https://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/inquiring-into-multi-layered-preventative-partnership/>

Public service reform and participatory budgeting: How can Scotland learn from
international evidence?
<http://whatworksscotland.ac.uk/publications/public-service-reform-how-can-scotland-learn-from-international-evidence/>

6. Appendices

a. Finding CPPs to partner with What Works Scotland and explore CAR

In mid-2014, What Works Scotland put out an open call to all CPPs in Scotland inviting interested parties to collaborate with us (Source: What Works Scotland Call for Partners, July 2014):

We will work with specific community planning partnerships (or local authorities and their key partners) involved in the design and delivery of public services to:

- learn what is and what isn't working in their local area
- encourage collaborative learning with a range of local authority, business, public sector and community partners
- better understand what effective policy interventions and effective services look like
- promote the use of evidence in planning and service delivery
- help organisations get the skills and knowledge they need to use and interpret evidence
- create case studies for wider sharing and sustainability
- support change processes.

The initial idea included focusing on partnering with CPPs in four case sites to explore the key issues they were facing as they sought to reform their public services and put Christie into action:

We [What Works Scotland] will dedicate staff and resources initially to four CPP case study areas and take a collaborative action approach to addressing the issues above... Our intention is not to compare areas but to generate rich data about what is and isn't working and how this might change in contrasting places.

The What Works Scotland team would select areas and prospective CAR topics that would allow for depth and breadth of learning, taking into account the following:

- Choosing a range different kinds of issues across the national performance framework areas to provide useful learning about delivering different kinds of services
- Choosing areas that seek to investigate different kinds of need
- Getting a balance of the kinds of areas we have across Scotland: urban, rural and small town

- Identifying a balanced portfolio of four areas, with shadow areas that will allow What Works Scotland to learn as much as possible about what is and isn't working, and how change happens.

What Works Scotland sought “*active partners who are committed to engagement and learning*”. Interested CPPs completed an expression of interest, identifying:

- a. their need (substantive public service reform topics)
- b. their capacity (ability to commit strategic and other staff to work with What Works Scotland) and
- c. their sustainability (ability to spread learning from the work internally and across Scotland).

b. Descriptions of CAR conducted in each case site

Introduction

This appendix describes each CPP's early proposals to What Works Scotland for CAR inquiry topics, followed by a description of the CAR and related activities that actually took place once the CPPs and the researchers began to take the research processes forward. As typical in collaborative practice, initial plans and assumptions changed, making simple comparisons across the four case sites invalid.

i. Aberdeenshire

Dr James Henderson, researcher

Aberdeenshire has a population of just over a quarter of a million and includes suburban areas bordering Aberdeen City and smaller towns and villages. Key employment sectors include the oil industry, fishing, agriculture, tourism and public services. Levels of inequalities are lower than the Scottish average. Nevertheless, there are significant numbers of people living in or at the margins of poverty.

a. Starting point

The Aberdeenshire application to What Works Scotland focussed on three potential collaborative action research themes – health and social care; local and central community planning; and road safety. The first two themes were taken forward to the June 2015 What Works Scotland National Event.

b. Description of the CAR work

Two What Works Scotland researchers, Nick Bland and James Henderson, developed the research activities with local partners. The June 2015 What Works Scotland national event established two broad lines of inquiry:

(1) Community capacity building for health and well-being: led by Aberdeenshire Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) and What Works Scotland. This became four distinctive elements of inquiry work:

1. community links worker inquiry – cycle 1
2. community links worker inquiry – cycle 2
3. Beyond Action Learning Report
4. Developing a strategic approach to community health and well-being (see Table 1 in [Appendix v.](#) below).

Each was relevant to the HSCP's aspiration to use community capacity-building¹⁵ to both reduce health inequalities and pressures on health and social care services, and as part of its approach to the integration of health and social care services.

The early work focused on a long-running community links worker inquiry and then development of a draft brief for further analysis of inequalities. An inquiry team of nine studied in depth a community links worker pilot in a rural town and surrounding

¹⁵ Aberdeenshire HSCP Strategic Plan 2016-19: <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/media/16182/health-and-social-care-strategic-plan-march-2016-final.pdf>

community. Together, they built a complex understanding of what makes for good practice and what supports the development of good practice – [see the report here](#).

In parallel, a smaller team of three reflected on the learning from another earlier project – Beyond Action Learning. The key learning points from this were written up as the Beyond Action Learning report (Soutar, Warrender & Henderson, 2017) – [view the report here](#).

The learning from both these reports were shared: firstly, through extensive local consultations across the CPP; and then through discussion with senior and strategic HSCP management. This led to further work with the HSCP and its wider CPP partners, including a workshop, to support early development of a strategic approach to community capacity-building.

(2) Multi-layered preventative partnership-working ('putting Christie into action'): led by the CPP central development team, What Works Scotland, and later Aberdeenshire Alcohol and Drugs Partnership (ADP), and involving many other public and third/community sector partners. This developed into four distinctive elements of inquiry work:

1. scoping an inquiry group
2. development work with CPP board and executive
3. development work across CPP partners
4. final learning report (see Table 2 in v. below).

Each was relevant to the development of the 'partnership and participation' that is needed to 'put Christie into action' across central, local area and local community structures. The work focused increasingly on exploring 'preventing inequality' as per the Christie Commission agenda.

Early scoping work for an inquiry group concerned for evidence use by local and central community planning teams proved unsuccessful, with the CPP central strategy team seeing more value in work that supported the development of its strategy to implement the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. As a result, the work between the CPP and What Works Scotland shifted focus towards several related activities:

- Two development days and ongoing discussions with the CPP board, CPP executive and CPP central strategy team. These helped the various partners consider how to build stronger partnership-working and supported the development of the CPP's own review process of its partnership structures. A report of this work will be available as an appendix in the final learning report (Henderson, Bland & Aberdeenshire CPP partners, forthcoming) – available (once published) from the What Works Scotland [Aberdeenshire case site webpage](#).
- Two collaborative learning days across the CPP and its various layers – strategic, operational and frontline –including a national What Works Scotland learning event

on preventative spend in Aberdeen. These used both What Works Scotland and NHS Health Scotland evidence reviews and participatory discussions to deepen understanding of the Christie Commission agenda for change and found a certain focus on preventing inequalities.

- Two development workshops with CPP partners that supported relationship-building for strategy development including a Local Outcomes Improvement Plan priority on alcohol and reducing harm; and the strategy development work on community capacity-building with the HSCP (1) above).

Together, this work informed a co-produced research report on [Multi-layered preventative partnership working](#) and provided the back-drop to the reflective interviewing in 2017 – see the [final learning report](#) (Henderson, Bland & Aberdeenshire CPP partners, forthcoming – available on the [webpage](#) once published.)

During the process, we developed theory and practice. From the initial intention of building group-based inquiry teams to consider particularly topics – as in the community links worker inquiry (see Table 1, Section 7a) – we needed an approach relevant to a fast-changing, resource-constrained policy context (‘austerity’) and in response to emerging legislation.¹⁶ It became important to shift strategy to a developmental CAR, using an ‘inflight approach’ (see also the West Dunbartonshire description). The resulting action research activities (2015-17) became focused on building ‘safe spaces’ for dialogue and deliberation (Bartels & Wittmayer, 2014; Escobar, 2011) that could both:

- build relationships concerned to engage with the practical problems of public service reform e.g. discussions of partnership-working, participation and prevention
- support wider reflection on the challenges of the Christie Commission, the Scottish policy context and barriers to impacting on social and economic outcomes.

To achieve this developmental CAR approach and yet sustain continuity with the two broad tranches of inquiry (as above), we sought to integrate other strategies into the CAR agenda, namely:

Developing ‘co-produced’ research reports: five local research reports, which were ‘co-produced’ to varying degrees, have provided opportunities to deepen discussions of multi-layered preventative partnership-working. The final learning report (Henderson, Bland & Aberdeenshire CPP partners, forthcoming) seeks to conclude the learning process by drawing on the experiences and reflections of practitioners across the CPP partners.

Other What Works Scotland activity and resources: participants engaged with wider What Works Scotland activities:

¹⁶ Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014

- What Works Scotland national events, including the community-led poverty seminar in Dundee (Sept 2016), the child poverty seminar in Edinburgh (Aug 2017) and the prevention seminar series
- What Works Scotland citizens' jury work in Peterhead (see Bland, 2017) built discussions within CPP strategic managers about participatory practices
- What Works Scotland evidence reviews (Cook, 2015; Craig, 2014) supported discussions at the two collaborative learning days. A review of the UK evidence on Community-led Approaches to Reducing Poverty (Crisp et al., 2016) helped to frame a development workshop.

So, the CAR approach in Aberdeenshire resulted in two broad tranches of CAR inquiry. The first was about developing a strategic approach to capacity-building for health and well-being, and included two formal inquiry groups and one more informal group inquiry process. The second examined multi-layered preventative partnership-working, which generated four distinctive elements of informal group inquiry.

For more detail of the research activities within these inquiries see Tables 1 and 2 in [Appendix v](#). below.

ii. Fife

Dr Hayley Bennett, researcher

Fife is Scotland's third largest local authority/CPP area by population (approx. 370,000 people, a third of whom live in the main three towns) and contains a diversity of rural and urban areas, affluent and deprived neighbourhoods.

a. Starting point

The Fife CPP system identifies and operates through seven distinct local community planning areas. The Fife application to What Works Scotland focused on one specific locality (Kirkcaldy) to initially explore three existing community planning activities:

- 1) a welfare hub and spokes service
- 2) a new family hub in a deprived locality

At the June 2015 retreat, the Fife applicants emphasised a desire to use the What Works Scotland project and CAR approach to improve issues of cross-departmental working, multi-agency interactions, and collaborative practice. Establishing the three Fife inquiry groups (known as PITs- partnership innovation teams) formed part of a wider co-designed and intensive CAR programme throughout 2015 and 2016 to enable strategic and organisational change. This included establishing a strategy group to connect to wider agendas and source PIT members, creating events that supported individuals and groups to understand how an inquiry process works (including seminars and home retreats), a range of new research resources, and providing group facilitation.

By early 2016, the groups had shifted from the initial application to explore: a) local impact and response to welfare sanctions; b) family interventions; and c) school partnership working. They all sought to deliver these during 2016 and, using a specially designed critical reflection research template, produce an inquiry report based on these topics by 2017.

b. Description of the CAR work

The Fife CAR activities formed a semi-structured programme of work, which involved creating a strategy group (including What Works Scotland membership), a series of events and resources, and three concurrent inquiry groups. In total, the CAR programme lasted 90 weeks. As well as working with the strategy group, the What Works Scotland researcher liaised regularly with the CPP officers and inquiry leads.

In early 2015, the What Works Scotland researcher took part in job shadowing, one-to-one meetings, 'drive arounds', and relationship building meetings with most of the original applicants. The subsequent Fife CAR programme was based on a number of key points: emphasis on collaborative working and changing practice; focus on generating local and experiential knowledge to create change; and connecting the centrally based (and newly created) community planning team with local activities. Whilst organised and somewhat

structured, the Fife CAR approach involved an iterative and reflective process to establish the conditions for inquiry work based on key characteristics: critical reflection; group work and dialogue; embedding in local and policy context; co-designing; and creating conditions for inquiry activities.

Collectively, the What Works Scotland researcher and key Fife contacts spent much time throughout establishing the pre-conditions. Some individuals had not worked together before, many were not co-located in the same offices or towns, and some did not have established working relationships. Many were not familiar with inquiry work or CAR. In brief, for the What Works Scotland researcher this involved:

- 90 weeks intensive engagement in the field
- 703 incoming emails (99.5% response rate)
- Engaging with 87 practitioners
- Working closely with 48 'core' practitioners from 12 different occupational groups
- 68 phone calls received and made
- 10 strategy group meetings
- 51 total PIT meetings
- 30 additional in-person meetings
- 6 reports written or co-written (plus practitioners' Fife CPP outputs)
- 21 tools or resources provided
- Establishing a Knowledge Hub (and delivering KHub training) OE: This would make for a nice infographic, with the CAR researcher depicted at the centre....

Within the programme there were three, concurrent PITs. All three went through a phase of forming, reforming, and refocussing over the course of the 90 weeks. By the end of the programme, the three groups reflected on the following inquiry topics/activities. All undertook primary research into a local issue.

The Welfare PIT:

“How can we improve our knowledge of what sanctions data is available across partner agencies in Fife? How can we use this to prevent people from being sanctioned? Or better support those who have been sanctioned?”

This inquiry involved a team of practitioners from a range of professions, departments, and organisations. By working through an inquiry together the group questioned, challenged, and explored the viewpoints and activities of other organisations and professions operating in the same locality or with the same citizens who experience welfare reform such as benefit sanctions. The PIT explored national data sets on welfare sanctions (DWP Stat Xplore), produced local Kirkcaldy level briefings to inform decision-making, and upskilled local staff to continue to use the database in the future. The PIT held an event in May 2016 to explore data sharing, examine external evidence on the impact of welfare sanctions, communicate available support services, and build working practice and relations. The group developed

vignettes (and the skills to continue to use this method) as a way to discuss and collect data on difficult subjects with diverse practitioners.

The Family PIT:

“Why do families participate in Family Fun sessions?”

After a longer period of reform and focus, this group involved practitioners from Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes. The group undertook interviews with parents and staff to understand best practice around Family Fun sessions where parents and their children could enjoy doing activities together after school. This included the impact on the relationship between parents and children, and parents and schools. They explored how best to introduce these sessions in other localities. By developing the skills to research and explore the design and implementation of programmes across localities some of the PIT members were able to share best practice and improve their understanding of what works to transfer information between places.

The school PIT:

“How can we improve partnership working with schools to support young people in need?”

The group explored partnership working between high schools and other services in Kirkcaldy. Using an instrumental case study of a high school, they explored the different perspectives, barriers, and difficulties to establishing and maintaining partnership working and referral systems for young people requiring support. In the process, they improved their previous working arrangement by opening communication and building relational practices with different practitioners. They undertook a survey and facilitated two focus groups using KETSO (facilitation technique).

The PIT distributed the questionnaire to key staff and to multiple partner agencies involved with the High School (for example local authority education staff, third sector youth workers, and further education staff). The focus groups involved school employees and a wide range of other partners. The policy team led the analysis and the PIT identified a series of recommendations to improve partnership working with schools.

As such, the CAR approach in Fife resulted in a co-produced ‘CAR programme’ of connected activities involving a strategy group, three inquiry groups (welfare, schools, families), CAR training and research support, home retreats and inquiry events; plus opportunistic activities including ad-hoc participation and guidance for annual community planning events.

More detail of research activity within these inquiries is set out in the table at [Appendix vi](#).

iii. Glasgow

Dr Richard Brunner, researcher

With more than 600,000 people, Glasgow has Scotland's largest local authority population and is the most ethnically diverse (12% from an ethnic minority in 2011). Whilst it remains the most deprived city and local authority area in Scotland, it also contains areas of wealth.

a. Starting point

Glasgow's interest prior to the June 2015 National Event was to work with What Works Scotland on three priorities stemming from its 2013 Single Outcome Agreement:

- a. evaluation of an area-based initiative seeking to tackle systemic inequality in the city over ten years through local co-produced and asset-based activities in nine areas of approx. 10,000 population ('Thriving Places')
- b. using evidence to tackle in-work poverty
- c. implementing and evaluating participatory budgeting (PB).

Exploring these three at the national event resulted in the decision that in-work poverty was not thought a suitable or timely project for a CAR approach, leaving two priorities.

b. Description of the CAR work

Strategic liaison with Glasgow CPP was with the Head of Democratic Services, with regular reporting to them on CAR and related activities throughout the programme, also involving Professor Nick Watson from What Works Scotland. Relationships with operational staff were developed through meetings, emails, telephone calls, discussions and 'drive-arounds' with officers prospectively involved in CAR activities in the three active Thriving Places areas (Gorbals, Parkhead & Dalmarnock and Ruchill & Possilpark) and involved with PB. As those collaborative relationships developed, the focus of the inquiry groups also developed, in line with CAR theory. Overall, we took a strongly pragmatic approach to CAR in Glasgow.

The focus of the PB group was to develop a PB evaluation toolkit fit for the purposes of Glasgow. The lead Democratic Services officer for PB asked a range of public sector and third sector officers to join an inquiry group, which started in mid-2015. With his background in PB, Dr Oliver Escobar from What Works Scotland played an 'expert' role in the group. They met fifteen times with up to seven members involved, reading literature, learning from examples, and prioritising indicators, leading to the production of a toolkit in mid-2017 suitable for large and small PB activities in Glasgow.

In mid-2016, on behalf of the elected member responsible for PB, the lead PB officer asked whether What Works Scotland could facilitate a learning visit to Paris, Europe's leading city for PB, to enable learning by Glasgow on mainstreaming PB. What Works Scotland agreed, on the proviso that other case sites were invited, to enhance cross-CPP collaboration. Fife

CPP were also contemplating mainstreaming PB, so seven officers from the two CPPs collaborated on a joint visit to the Paris PB team in December 2016, with two What Works Scotland researchers. The visit focused on the [use of technology, equality monitoring, co-ordination, and staffing implications of mainstreaming PB](#).

The Thriving Places CAR activities took several forms. First, supporting officers to gather evidence about their work in Thriving Places through a case study development group, the group involving five officers and one community activist across three TP areas in three regions of the city (including the new Priesthill & Househillwood TP area). Group members learned together about devising strong case studies, developed and peer-reviewed their ideas and two case studies were completed by members.

Alongside this, CPP strategic officers, including those from health & social care, had expressed an interest in What Works Scotland conducting an Evaluability Assessment of TP, an innovation in which Dr Peter Craig from What Works Scotland had expertise. EA brings officers at multiple levels involved with an initiative together to collaboratively develop a theory of change for the intervention to allow them to gain a unified understanding and have a clear basis for evaluating outcomes. The EA facilitators also recommend an approach to evaluation that took into account the context of the initiative.

The researcher worked with the CPP to bring together twenty-five multiple agency officers for this collaboration in 2015-16 (see [Brunner, R., Craig, P. and Watson, N. \(2017\)](#) and Brunner, R., Craig, P. and Watson, N., forthcoming). What Works Scotland was therefore facilitating strategic collaboration across a wide range of officers to enable a general unified understanding of TP and its evaluation, whilst in parallel working intensely using more formal research skills with a small group of practitioners at the local TP level. In common these supported processual evaluation of a highly complex and autonomous initiative.

A third initiative, collaborative dissertations in Thriving Places, further underpinned this approach. This was proposed by Thriving Places workers and co-developed with me. It was designed to:

- enhance the relationship between University of Glasgow and some of the most deprived areas of Glasgow
- allow Masters students the opportunity to conduct fieldwork that would be useful to TP areas and staff
- enable TP staff to have some quick, reliable research findings, supervised by university academics, which would processually inform them about a variety of TP initiatives.

This collaborative initiative has now entered its third year and has been mainstreamed within the University to sustain it beyond the What Works Scotland lifespan.

A further piece of work evidencing public service reform using a more traditional research approach emerged from early work to develop collaborative relationships in Thriving Places.

At a meeting of the CPP board held in Gorbals, discussion included an initiative called Operation Modulus, facilitated by Fire & Rescue Scotland, through which youth crime in the area had been reduced by 80%. As it had qualities of being area-based, partnership-led and outcome-focused on improving life in deprived communities, this meant it could be evidenced as a distinct project exemplifying PSR. The researcher conducted a case study (Brunner & Watson, 2016). A follow-up What Works Scotland case study of Operation Modulus being adapted and co-produced in two further areas of Glasgow has now been published (Cullingworth et al, 2018).

So, the CAR approach in Glasgow resulted in two formal CAR groups (participatory budgeting and case study groups); two opportunistic inquiry groups (Paris visit and collaborative dissertations), one CAR-related group (evaluability assessment), and a complementary study (Operation Modulus).

More detail of research activity within these inquiries is set out in [Appendix vii](#).

iv. West Dunbartonshire

Dr Claire Bynner, researcher

West Dunbartonshire is the tenth smallest Scottish local authority by population (circa 90,000) and the second smallest in terms of land area. The area combines a high-density settlement with a more rural hinterland. It is due west of Glasgow and shares many of its neighbour's socio-economic challenges.

a. Starting point

West Dunbartonshire staff identified a new place-based neighbourhood programme, known locally as 'Your Community' as the focus for CAR. Three priorities were identified for work with What Works Scotland:

- a) community-led action planning – how to design meaningful and effective processes of community engagement and to increase the level of influence from communities on neighbourhood priorities and action plans
- b) community profiling – how to produce accessible data profiles for 16 neighbourhood areas that could be used to inform the community-led action planning process
- c) neighbourhood joint working – how to improve collaborative working between front-line practitioners working in deprived neighbourhoods

Work on community profiles required the expertise of professional data analysts so this project became a complementary study rather than a CAR project. For reasons of staff capacity and suitability of research design, the main focus for the CAR activity became to develop community-led action planning and included an evaluation of the 'Your Community' neighbourhood approach.

b. Description of the CAR work

The communities team coordinator was the primary contact and identified lead for all CAR work with What Works Scotland. The What Works Scotland researchers – Claire Bynner and Kenneth Gibb – held bi-monthly meetings with the communities team coordinator and community planning to plan and review the CAR work.

The CAR activity in West Dunbartonshire took an 'inflight' (Henderson and Bynner, 2018) and opportunistic approach. This meant working with policy implementation that was in progress and looking for opportunities to integrate action research methods into planned events and activities. Local staff and management wanted to make progress with developing a new approach to community engagement at the neighbourhood level. They wanted to organise a 'development day' within the CPP to discuss community empowerment and how to increase the level of community influence in local decision-making. What Works Scotland researchers trained staff to conduct interviews and facilitated a session to design a development day on 'community-led action planning'.

Community development officers conducted qualitative interviews with their peers in other local authorities and with a local community representative. The officers videoed the interviews (with consent from the participants) and shared their findings with the wider community planning partnership at the 'development day'. The event was facilitated by What Works Scotland researchers and attended by 30 participants including West Dunbartonshire Council employees and local voluntary sector organisations.

The group-based inquiry in West Dunbartonshire took the form of an evaluation of the place-based programme named 'Your Community'. The evaluation was established in the second year of What Works Scotland. The evaluation approach that was proposed and agreed was contribution analysis, which has its own pre-defined stages and process. Contribution analysis entails a process of producing a 'theory of change', which forms the basis of the evaluation and is a key output from the research alongside the evaluation report. Our CAR approach involved practitioners gathering the primary data for the evaluation and co- analysis. The outcome of this process was a report for the local CPP and a national What Works Scotland report – 'Insights from Your Community – a place-based approach to public service reform'.

Other activities to support this CAR activity included:

- A training workshop on Community Conversations that Matter covering community empowerment principles and method delivered by Dr Oliver Escobar. Twenty-four participants attended from the CPP including community representatives from local community organisations
- A seminar on community-led approaches to reducing poverty sharing findings from a UK evidence review. Some 30 participants, including local and national organisations, attended.

So, the CAR approach in West Dunbartonshire resulted in one opportunistic activity (action research integrated into the planning of the 'Development Day'), one formal CAR inquiry group (Evaluation of Your Community), one complementary project (What Works in Community Profiling) and other supportive activities including training workshops and seminars.

The timeline below charts key events and research projects conducted by What Works Scotland in West Dunbartonshire. The CAR projects are highlighted in yellow.

West Dunbartonshire timeline



More detail of research activity within these inquiries is set out in [Appendix viii](#).

v. Aberdeenshire table

Table 1: Community capacity- building for health and well- being	<i>Timings</i>	<i>Co-researchers and/or Participants</i>	<i>Activities – collaboration, research and action</i>
(i) Community links worker inquiry: cycle 1 – Learning from the pilot project in Insch	Jun 2015 – Aug 2016	Team of nine from HSCP, CPP partners (and What Works Scotland) including: improvement and training; policy; public health; third and community sector. 11 report consultees across sectors 12 group meetings; one study visit; 1 data analysis session	Research planning Desk research Study visit + interviews Data analysis and discursive analysis Report writing + consultation Reflective writing <i>Report on Cycle 1 of Community Links Worker Research</i>
(ii) Community links worker inquiry: cycle 2 – considering inequalities	Aug – Nov 2016	Initial team of six (Inc. What Works Scotland) Two group meetings + early phone discussions	Developing initial brief – but not then developed further <i>Draft Research Brief inc. in Prevention Report (see Table 2)</i>
(iii) Beyond Action Learning report: action learning sets and improvement	Dec 2015 – Apr 2017	Team of three people from HSCP, NHS Grampian, What Works Scotland Ten report consultees Four group discussions + phone/email discussions	Co-production, consultation, dissemination of report – including discussion with senior manager <i>Report on Beyond Action Learning Report + blog-piece</i>

(iv) Developing a strategic approach to community capacity-building	Dec 2015 – July 2017	<p>Discussions with HSCP management (6+)</p> <p>Discussions with Community Health in Partnership Team (5);</p> <p>1 Development workshop across CPP Partners (13 participants inc. What Works Scotland) + case study consultation</p>	<p>Informal discussion of strategic and practice issues.</p> <p>Considering evidence.</p> <p>Workshop discussion of strategic and practice issues.</p> <p><i>Case study in Prevention Report (see Table 2)</i></p>
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Table 2: Multi-layered preventative partnership-working	<i>Timings</i>	<i>Co-researchers/ Participants</i>	<i>Activities – collaboration, research and action</i>
(i) Scoping work for an inquiry group ... and further scoping work	May – July 2015	Two scoping discussions with central and local community planners	Issues mapping and dialogue – but no CAR group or focused inquiry resulted from this work
	Apr 2015 – May 2016	Informal discussions and participation in meetings across CPP (25+)	Building understanding of the CPP, contacts and mapping networks in order to support further development
(ii) Development work with the board and executive	Mainly Nov 2015 – June 2016	Board and executive members – various across different activities (30 people approx.)	<p>Two development days.</p> <p>Presentations and/or informal discussion with board (Sept 2015 – Dec 2016); other discussions with executive; Internal Review Team and individuals</p> <p><i>Informal reporting to board – draft to be included in Final Report (see below)</i></p>

(iii) Development work across CPP partners – including re. Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP)	Nov 2015 – Dec 2016	Various across approx. 50+ people in total across four key events and related consultation work on report/case studies	Two collaborative learning days Two development workshops: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LOIP priority: alcohol • community capacity-building (see Table 1) <i>'Prevention Report' and related case studies including reflective writing + blog-piece (ADP)</i>
(iv) Final Learning Report	2017 – 18	Twenty-three participants via reflective interview + earlier research material; Four short profiles re. community organisations Consultation work (tbc.) Potential for further reflective inputs ...	<i>Final report on learning re. Collaborative and Participatory Governance</i> (Henderson, Bland & Aberdeenshire CPP partners, forthcoming) – work in progress and scale of co-production unclear currently.

vi. Fife table

Group	Membership	Time	Characteristics
Strategy group	<p>PIT leaders, departmental managers, multi-agency representatives</p> <p>Main organiser: Fife Council Policy Coordinator (and What Works Scotland researcher)</p> <p>Membership varies over time, 28 members over total period</p> <p>Regular members 12</p>	<p>2015 and 2016</p> <p>Two pre-strategy group meetings in 2014</p> <p>Eight full strategy group meetings from March 2015-Dec 2016</p> <p>One meeting November 2017 (catch up)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership (shared) • Support inquiry groups • Offer helps and advice • Connect to wider agendas • Identify opportunities and problems
Welfare PIT	<p>Practitioner PIT leader</p> <p>The group comprised of Department for Work and Pensions/Jobcentre Plus, Local authority community learning and development, policy, research, CARF, Fife Gingerbread, Housing, What Works Scotland</p> <p>Members: 14 core, 34 periphery (attended one meeting or just the event)</p>	<p>2015-2017</p> <p>Met 22 times</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership: Community Development manager Kirkcaldy • Collab: Across organisations and departments • Research: Data exploration

Welfare Event	<p>Forty-two attendees from various organisations and professions in Kirkcaldy incl. welfare PIT</p> <p>DWP, third sector organisations, elected members, charities, various council departments, NHS</p>	Full-day event- May 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welfare PIT co-designed and organised • Data collection and collaborative working vehicle • External evidence and research presentations
Family PIT	<p>The group involved practitioners from Kirkcaldy and Glenrothes (CLD, policy, research, neighbourhood officers).</p> <p>Members: 20 core, 4 periphery</p>	<p>2015-2017</p> <p>Met: 15 times</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership: Family Coordinator • Collab: Central policy, local, across CPP localities, • Research: interviews with parents and delivery staff
Schools PIT	<p>The group involved CLD, education, third sector, and teaching staff.</p> <p>Core: 9, Periphery 2</p>	<p>2015-2017</p> <p>Met approx. 12 times</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership: original a third sector leader, changed to a local authority education officer, • Research: questionnaire on partnership working followed by focus group session (below)
Partnership Research Session	<p>Sixteen attendees</p> <p>Across a range of practitioners and organisations engaged in Kirkcaldy based school work or supporting young people</p>	<p>Three hours session for focus group</p> <p>Sept 2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PIT co-designed and organised • Data collection event • In a school at end of school day • Policy team facilitated using KETSO approach and analysed findings

<i>Fife CAR programme activities</i>		Throughout 2015-2017	
Home retreats (x 2)	Attendees: 1 st home retreat= 27 Send home retreat = 27	Two x full day events: Dates: Oct 2015 and Nov 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead: What Works Scotland researcher • Covered basics of research design • Introduction to critical reflection • Facilitated discussions • Provided a 9 step research process • Provided adapted CAR cycle • Presentations from practitioners
Seminars and events			
Introduction to CAR	Presentation: Chris Chapman and Hayley Bennett (repeat from National retreat) Attendees: approx. 35 Strategy group, inquiry members, potential inquiry members	Two hour session May 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Works Scotland led • Presentation on inquiry cycle model
Understanding CAR in your context	Workshop: Hayley Bennett Attendees: eight policy team	Half day workshop June 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Works Scotland led • Facilitated session with exercises
Presentation to Fife Partnership Executive Group	Presentation: Strategy members and What Works Scotland Attendees: 10 including FPEG members	Slot on agenda- July 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation on What Works Scotland

Distributed leadership seminar	Academic presentation: Jim Spillane Attendees: 25	Two hour seminar in Kirkcaldy, Sept 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What Works Scotland led: Presentation and Q&A
Using a CAR approach to work with young people	Academic/research practice presentation: Christina McMellon on Edinburgh council's action research approach with young people Attendees: 25	June 2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What Works Scotland organised (response to capacity issues and problems grasping action research)
Kirkcaldy elected members learning day	Attendees: 13 Including council leader.	Jan 2017 Three hour lunch session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lead by What Works Scotland researcher and community planning officer Presentations and reflections from three PIT leads and Paris trip Thoughts and reflections from elected members
<i>Additional/complementary support</i>			
Evidence to Action event	Attendees: 50 Led by What Works Scotland Sarah Morton, formally outside Fife CAR programme but helpful to promote What Works Scotland, help practitioners think about evidence use and research/data.	One-day event Nov 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What Works Scotland led with Fife evidence use practitioner Presentations on putting evidence into practice from various Fife council practitioners

<p>“Making the change: delivering a better and fairer Fife”</p>	<p>Attendees: 75 people</p> <p>Community Planning Manager wanted to create an opportunity to bring partners together to discuss and exchange on how to advance community planning and connect the Fairer Fife recommendations with the upcoming development of the Fife Local Outcome Improvement Plan and recent changes to community planning.</p> <p>Led by community planning team within broad bubble of What Works Scotland activities, What Works Scotland RF was a member of event working groups, helped to organise and provide advice.</p>	<p>One day event, Nov 2016</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Planning team’s event • What Works Scotland RF helped design and arranged presentations from Oliver Escobar and James Mitchell • Led by community planning manager and officer • What Works Scotland produced a post-event blog to share and publicise the work taking place locally
<p>Facilitation training (CB)</p>	<p>Four Fife participants attended the facilitation training – dialogue and deliberation (CB, OE, WF).</p>	<p>Two day training course</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Works Scotland led • Matched skills needs of practitioners
<p>Paris Trip to explore Participatory Budgeting (with Glasgow)</p>	<p>Two Fife strategy group members (and one practitioner from an adjacent locality) took part in the Paris inquiry group trip</p>	<p>Two day learning event</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Works Scotland led (Glasgow case site) • Offered opportunity to other sites, matched some parallel work on PB • Fife have established a PB PIT group post-our input to continue with this learning

vii. Glasgow table

Group	Members hip	Time	Characteristics
PB evaluation group (PB)	Seven members, four core. cross-service & third sector	Met 15 times mid-2015 to Dec 2016	<p>Leadership: PB lead involved – co-ordinated CAR group.</p> <p>Collab: Two lead members driving group.</p> <p>Research: Group read literature, looked at other examples, and prioritised indicators that were important in local context.</p> <p>Action: pilot toolkit devised.</p> <p>Main What Work Scotland researcher role: facilitator/broker.</p> <p>Other: OE as expert.</p>
Spin-off Paris PB learning visit (Paris)	Four Glasgow, three Fife (all local authority).	Two-day intense visit; emails to plan visit and co-produce outcomes (blogs/film); a 12-mth process (Jun 2016-May2017).	<p>Leadership: PB lead proposed the visit, following councillor suggestion.</p> <p>Collab: Glasgow led; Fife joined</p> <p>Research: experiential/practice-based, comparative</p> <p>Action: Paris visit; blogs and video.</p> <p>Main What Works Scotland researcher role: co-ordinate visit activities; second order researcher (<i>'how workers learn internationally'</i>)</p> <p>Other: Glasgow/Fife (and Paris) PB relationship has now taken on a life of its own.</p>
TP Case study development group (CS)	Five officers, one activist (cross-service)	Ten two-hour CAR group meetings (Oct 15 – Jan 17).	<p>Leadership: driven by me; members offered venues. 'Contracted' CAR – CPP wanted assurance on time commitment.</p> <p>Collab: Three members fully participated. Peer feedback on drafts.</p> <p>Research: Primary research into local topic of concern; some secondary lit.</p> <p>Action: 2 Case studies completed</p>

			<p>Main What Works Scotland researcher role: A supervisory/educational process, plus advocate, animator, planner, facilitator.</p>
<p>Collaborative dissertations in TP (CD)</p>	<p>Six officers (two services), seven MSc students (11, 36 and 37 students at events)</p>	<p>2015-16-17. Ongoing.</p>	<p>Leadership: TP officers proposed this as a means of supporting them to evidence their work; and for students to engage in fieldwork in the East End.</p> <p>Collab: The officers and I (and Emma Smith from UofG – mainstreaming this) co-produce a seminar for MSc students annually, and then students take up individually with the officers (and a University supervisor).</p> <p>Research: students do this (officers have come up with proposed topics).</p> <p>Action: seven dissertations, some used by officers (email evidence).</p> <p>Main What Works Scotland researcher role: broker between officers and University; supervisor; trouble-shooter; mainstreamer.</p> <p>Other: Collaborative dissertations to continue beyond life of What Works Scotland.</p>
<p>Evaluability Assessment of TP (EA)</p>	<p>Approx. 25 officers (cross-service)</p>	<p>Four meetings in various configurations, Jan-Jun 2016.</p>	<p>Leadership: Not a co-produced topic; top-down from CPP leads/What Works Scotland.</p> <p>Collaboration: brought together officers at all levels and created space for dialogue on evaluation.</p> <p>Research: Little (What Works Scotland brought research to the table).</p> <p>Action: ex-post interviews demonstrate reflexivity and action (see Brunner, Craig & Watson, forthcoming)</p> <p>Main What Works Scotland researcher role: facilitator, broker, report-writer.</p>
<p>Operation Modulus case studies (1 and 2)</p>			<p>Not a CAR group. This research demonstrates public service reform in action in Glasgow.</p>

viii. West Dunbartonshire table

Group	Timings	Co-researchers and/or Participants	Activities – collaboration, research and action
(i) Community-led Action Planning Development Day: cycle 1 – planning, researching and delivering a learning a development day for practitioner across the CPP	June – Dec 2015	<p>Team of five from CPP/Communities Team (and What Works Scotland two researchers) including: community development officers</p> <p>Three interviews conducted with peers in other CPPs and with a chair of a community-led initiative</p> <p>Meetings; interviews (video recorded); event planning session</p>	<p>Research planning</p> <p>Training in narrative interviewing</p> <p>Facilitated event planning session</p> <p>Study visit + interviews</p> <p>Data analysis</p> <p>C-AP Development Day event to disseminate findings and co-produce new approach</p> <p>Report writing + consultation</p> <p><i>Report: What Works Scotland & West Dunbartonshire Community Planning Partnership – Community-Led Action Planning Report</i></p>
(ii) Group based inquiry – evaluation of ‘Your Community’ – a place-based programme	March 2016- Oct-2016	<p>Team of seven (including two What Works Scotland researchers Claire Bynner and Christina McMellon) including: community development officers and community safety officers</p>	<p>Five facilitate sessions. Each session lasted approximately 2-2.5 hours.</p> <p>Session 1: introduction to CAR and contribution analysis</p> <p>Session 2: Theory of Change</p> <p>Session 3: Research methods and choices</p> <p>Session 4: Collaborative analysis</p> <p>Session 5: Initial research findings</p> <p><i>Report: Insights from ‘Your Community’ – a place-based approach to public service reform</i></p>

Additional/complementary support activity			
Training workshop in community empowerment, dialogue and deliberation skills - <i>'Community Conversations That Matter'</i>	Attendees: 24 from across the CPP Delivered by What Works Scotland Oliver Escobar August, 2016	One-day event November 2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What Works Scotland led training - arising from previous work on Community-led action planning
Seminar- <i>'Community-led approaches to reducing poverty'</i>	Attendees: 30 people from across the What Works Scotland network Seminar on the findings from a JRF funded review conducted by Dr Richard Crisp and team from the Centre for Economic and Regional Research	One day event, November 2016, held in Clydebank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chaired and facilitated by What Works Scotland Richard Crisp (keynote speaker) Bruce Whyte from GCPH co-presenter
Facilitation training	Three West Dunbartonshire participants attended the What Works Scotland facilitation training – dialogue and deliberation	Two day training course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What Works Scotland led – Claire Bynner, Oliver Escobar and Wendy Faulkner Matched skills needs of practitioners